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**FOLLY TO THE *ḤUNAFĀ'***

**The Cross of Christ  
in Arabic Christian-Muslim Controversy  
in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries A.D.**

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Mark Nathanael Swanson

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## PREFACE

### *Title and theme*

One of the oldest known Arabic versions of the letters of St. Paul is found in a manuscript of the ninth century preserved in the library of St. Catherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai. In this manuscript, catalogued as Arabic MS 155 and published nearly a century ago by Margaret Dunlop Gibson, we find the following translation of 1 Corinthians 1:22-25:<sup>(1)</sup>

- 22 لأنَّ اليهود يطلبون آيات،  
والحنفاء يلتمسون الحكمة.  
23 فأما نحن، نكرز المسيح المصلوب،  
أما لليهود فشك، وللأمم حمق؛  
24 فأما المختارين من اليهود ومن الحنفاء  
المسيح قوّة الله وحكمة الله.  
25 لأنَّ حمق الله أحكم من الناس هو،  
وضعف الله أقوى من الناس هو.

### TRANSLATION:

- 22 Because the Jews demand signs,  
and the *ḥunafā'* seek wisdom.  
23 As for us, we proclaim Christ, the crucified,  
for the Jews a thing of doubt, and for the nations folly;  
24 but for those who are chosen from among the Jews and from the *ḥunafā'*  
Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.  
25 Because the folly of God is wiser than the people,  
and the weakness of God is stronger than the people.

The word left untranslated, *ḥunafā'* (singular *ḥanīf*), comes from the Syriac *ḥanpê*, meaning "pagans," "Gentiles," or "Greeks." According to St. Paul in his early Arabic dress, the generality of the *ḥunafā'* found the "word of the cross" (1 Cor. 1:18) to be "folly" (*ḥumq*), the precise opposite of the wisdom (*ḥikmah*) for which they were seeking.

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1. Copied without correction from GIBSON, *Epistles* (1894), 39\*/8-13.

Curiously, the loan-word *ḥanīf/ḥunafā'* is not only to be found in the Arabic writings of Christians of Syriac cultural background, but occurs several times in the Arabic sacred scripture of the *Muslims*, the Qur'ān. There it has a distinctive meaning, referring *not* to the polytheistic pagans but rather to those with a monotheistic faith like that of Abraham, whom the Qur'ān describes with the words: "ما كان إبراهيم يهودياً ولا نصرانياً، ولكن كان حنيفاً مسلماً، وما كان من المشركين" ("No; Abraham in truth was not a Jew, neither a Christian; but he was a *ḥanīf* and a *Muslim*; certainly he was never of the idolaters").<sup>(2)</sup> In Islamic usage *ḥanīf* very quickly came to be a synonym of *Muslim*, and *al-ḥanīfiyyah* a synonym of *Islām*.<sup>(3)</sup>

Christians who had come to live under Islamic rule as a result of the conquests of the seventh century quickly discovered that the New Testament "word of the cross" had not only been folly to the (Gentile) *ḥunafā'* of whom St. Paul had spoken, but was also folly to the latter-day (Muslim) *ḥunafā'*.<sup>(4)</sup> In its broadest outlines, the present study is an attempt to understand why "the word of the cross" struck the new *ḥunafā'* as folly, and to examine the ways in which Arabic-speaking Christians attempted to speak that word in the apologetic environment that the assumption and accusation of folly had come to characterize.

### *Subtitle and definition*

Further definition of the present study is given in its subtitle, "The Cross of Christ in Arabic Christian-Muslim Controversy in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries A.D."

By "*the cross of Christ*" I intend the whole complex of beliefs, interpretations, and practices arising from the (alleged!) death of Jesus Christ by crucifixion, including Christian use of and devotion to the symbol of the cross. Obviously, concern for this topic is distinctively Christian, and it will be obvious to every reader that the author of this study is a committed Christian interested in exploring a rather neglected chapter in the history of Christian thought. At the same time however, as a study of *Christian/Muslim controversy* this work will take the writings of Christians and Muslims into account, in the belief that the arguments of Christians were influenced by those of Muslims and *vice versa*, and that to a certain degree it is possible to trace the development of their early controversy over "the word of the cross," thereby gaining some insight into the dynamics of the early encounter of Christian and Islamic systems of belief. This is intended as a contribution in a field where most published monographs deal nearly exclusively with Christian *or* Islamic

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2. *Āl 'Imrān* (3):67. The English rendering is adapted from that of ARBERRY, *Koran* (1964), 55. Qur'ānic parallels and secondary literature are given in PARET, *Kommentar* (1981), 32–33 (under *al-Baqarah* (2):135).

3. See GRIFFITH, "Prophet" (1983), 118–121.

4. In the (Syriac) apologetic treatise of Nonnus of Nisibis the Muslims are called ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܝܫܘܥ ("the *ḥanpê* of today") or ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܝܫܘܥ ܕܝܡܝܢ ("the new *ḥanpê*"). VAN ROEY, *Nonnus* (1948), 9\*/26 and 12\*/9.

data, but not both. For example, Rachid Haddad's ground-breaking dissertation *La Trinité divine chez les théologiens arabes (750-1050)*<sup>(5)</sup> allots very little space to the Islamic speculation that the arabophone trinitarians attempted to exploit in their apologies,<sup>(6)</sup> while the best study of the Islamic "refutation of the Christians" genre, Abdelmajid Charfi's *al-Fikr al-Islāmī fī l-radd 'alā al-Naṣārā ilā nihāyat al-qarn al-rābi'/al-'āšir* ("Islamic thought concerning the refutation of the Christians until the end of the fourth/tenth century")<sup>(7)</sup> does not deal with the Arabic *Christian* literature produced contemporaneously with the Islamic material he surveys.

Obviously, the study of early Christian-Muslim conversation and controversy will be the study of *Arabic* literature, since it was the Arabic language that, from about the eighth century on, provided Christians and Muslims with a common medium of religious discourse. While I shall make some use of Greek and Syriac Christian works, these will be for the most part reports on or reflections upon Arabic conversations between Christians and Muslims.

I begin my study in *the eighth century A.D.* since it was only then that the extent of the adoption of Arabic by Christian populations in parts of the Islamic caliphate was such as to enable and demand the production of church books and apologetic works in that language; in fact, we have no documentary proof for the existence of any Arabic Christian religious text before the year 772.<sup>(8)</sup> With regard to the decision to close the period of study at the end of *the ninth century*, I must admit that I find no sharp line of demarcation at the precise year 900 A.D., and that it is not at all impossible that I have "trespassed" on the tenth century by making use of certain undated texts. However, the decision to bring the study to an end in *circa* 900 (with some emphasis on the "*circa*") is not entirely arbitrary. In the first place, I have constantly been aware of the necessity of keeping the period of study short enough to allow for a thorough survey of sources in the space of a single dissertation. A criticism that may be made of many previous studies in the fields of Arabic Christian apologetics and of the Islamic "refutation of the Christians" literature is that they have dealt with periods far too long to allow for thoroughness. This is the case, for example, in the work most closely related to the present study: François Jourdan's dissertation, "La mort du Messie en croix dans les églises araméennes et sa relation à l'Islam jusqu'à l'arrivée des Mongols en 1258."<sup>(9)</sup> While Jourdan's work is very helpful in its study of Christian pre-Islamic material,<sup>(10)</sup> he is only able to devote a single chapter to Christian-Muslim apologetic and polemical literature concerning the cross,<sup>(11)</sup> and that with a time frame embracing five entire centuries and parts of two

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5. HADDAD, *Trinité* (1985).

6. For a splendid example of the analysis which is possible with respect to Arabic Christian trinitarian apologetics, see GRIFFITH, "Concept" (1982).

7. CHARFI, *Radd* (1986).

8. See below, pp. 2-3.

9. JOURDAN, "Mort" (1988).

10. This occupies four chapters of his dissertation, 258 of 416 pages of text.

more. Clearly, this does not allow for much more than a sampling of texts. While it is no doubt too much to claim exhaustiveness for the present study, it has all along been my aim to produce a reasonably thorough survey of the relevant and accessible Arabic literature from the period delineated.

In the second place, the decades immediately preceding and following the year 900 A.D. are clearly a period when certain chapters in the history of Christian-Muslim controversy were coming to an end and new ones beginning. Three such endings and/or beginnings might be mentioned:

(a) As we shall see,<sup>(12)</sup> the Byzantine revival of the late ninth and tenth centuries had an effect upon Arabic Christian apologetic and polemical literature, in particular by enabling the reappearance of a *military* interpretation of the power of the cross. While the change in the Byzantines' military fortunes occurred gradually and unevenly, two datable events invoked by an early tenth-century Byzantine polemical text are Andronicus' slaughter of 18,000 Muslims in 904 and the great naval victory of Himerios in 908.<sup>(13)</sup> The present work, however, seeks to describe a kind of Christian apologetic that could not and did not seek resolution of the paradoxes of 1 Corinthians 1:22-25 in news from the battlefield.

(b) It will be argued below that the intent of the Qur'ānic verse *al-Nisā'* (4):157 is to *deny* that Jesus died the death of crucifixion, and that Muslims so understood it from as far back as we can trace throughout the eighth and ninth Christian centuries.<sup>(14)</sup> However, in the *tenth* century we begin to find alternative understandings of the verse appearing in certain corners of the Islamic world. A date that may be mentioned is 922 A.D., when al-Ḥallāḡ recited *al-Nisā'* (4):157 as an interpretation of his own (very real) crucifixion.<sup>(15)</sup>

(c) The tenth century is a time of new beginnings in the history of Arabic Christian literature in general. In Baghdad, Yaḥyā b. 'Adī (893-974) forged an entirely new sort of Arabic Christian apologetic drawing on the Plotinus-tinted Aristotelianism of the philosophical school of that city.<sup>(16)</sup> In Egypt, Sāwīrūs b. al-Muqaffa' (d. ca. 1000) stands at the origins of an Arabic *Coptic* literature that would come to brilliant flower in the thirteenth century. With the earliest apologetic productions of Yaḥyā and Sāwīrūs (from about the year 940), concurrently-running new chapters in the history of Arabic Christian apologetics are definitely under way.

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11. Chapter 6, pp. 317-77.

12. Below, pp. 82-84.

13. See the "Letter of Arethas to the Emir at Damascus," KARLIN-HAYTER, "Letter" (1959-60), 300/25-30 [FT ABEL, "Lettre" (1954), 368].

14. See below, pp. 97-114.

15. See below, p. 109, note 76. For tenth-century Ismā'īlī understandings of *al-Nisā'* (4):157, see below, p. 144.

16. On Yaḥyā, see especially SAMIR, *Tawḥīd* (1980) and PLATTI, *Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī* (1983).

## Structure

Chapter One provides an overview of the sources used in this study, and should be regarded and used as a work of reference. The story of controversy that I try to relate begins in Chapter Two, which examines the evidence and reasons for the Muslims' antipathy toward the symbol of the cross. The heart of the study is the three linked chapters that follow: "The Crucifixion of Jesus/ʿĪsā b. Maryam," "The Crucifixion of the Redeemer," and "The Crucifixion of 'My Lord and My God.'" The first of these (Chapter Three) focusses on the problem of the historicity of the crucifixion of Christ, between Islamic denial and Christian assertion. Chapter Four goes on to explore various attempts by arabophone Christians to give an apologetic, Muslim-directed soteriological shaping to the story of Jesus, including his crucifixion, and the controversy that these attempts aroused. In Chapter Five the theme is the Christian confession of the death of the one confessed as Lord and God, a confession that elicited Muslims' incredulity and provoked their very sharp polemics, to which Christians reacted sometimes with attempts to explain (and explain away?) the paradoxes of faith in the Crucified, and sometimes with a determined assertion of these paradoxes enabled in part by apologetic strategies of great ingenuity. A Conclusion then offers a brief assessment of the controversy.

## Texts and translations

This study contains a good number of brief Arabic texts, for the most part freshly edited and provided with English translations. I have tried to refrain from treating these texts with a heavy editorial hand, and consider my primary contribution to their understanding the addition of punctuation and some *taškīl*. To facilitate reading I have frequently divided the texts into thought units and spread them out in a kind of outline form across the page; hopefully readers will find this helpful rather than distracting. In the case of texts of about a page's length or more I have numbered the units for ease of reference and of comparison with the translation.

Where there are choices to be made between variant readings, or where there are corrections to be made in the text as found in the manuscript(s) or printed edition, the correct reading is given in the *body* of the text, with the variants or uncorrected form given in a note. Accommodations to classical orthography that do not involve a change in consonantal skeleton, in particular the addition of independent *hamzah* or the substitution of ع for ي or ؤ for و, have been made without note. As a further measure to keep texts and critical apparatus as uncluttered as possible, the following set of superscript symbols have been used to indicate very common orthographical corrections:

<sup>a</sup> : ع is found in the manuscript/edition where ا is required, or vice versa.

<sup>n</sup> : there is a mistake in indicating *tanwīn*, ً being written where not allowed or omitted where required.

- ° : final *alif* (the *alif otiosum*, e.g. ا in the ending وا) is improperly omitted or added.
- ˆ : َ is incorrectly written for ت or ث, or ت for َ.

Thus هدى and تمت in one of my edited texts means that the words are written هدا and تموة respectively in the manuscript or printed edition.

I have allowed either ثلث or ثلاث, إله or إلاه, etc.

### Transliterations

Apart from Arabic block quotations and verses from the Qur'ān, I have transliterated Arabic and Syriac words in the *body* of the text so that it not appear intimidating to readers unfamiliar with these languages. The systems of transliteration used are perfectly conventional and should cause no difficulty, although the following points might be noted:

For Arabic, ج = ġ, خ = ħ, ش = š, غ = ġ. The diphthongs are *ay* and *aw*. Final َ is transliterated *ah* (or *at* in the *status constructus*), and the *nisbah* ending يَّة (e.g.) is transliterated *iyyah*. The article is *always* written *al-* (or *l-* after a vowel).

For Syriac, vowels written with a weak letter are transliterated with a circumflex (*â, ê, î, û*) with the exception of , transliterated *ei*. *Zqāpâ* ( ) without following *alap* is transliterated *ā*. I have not differentiated in the transliteration between the hard and soft forms of the *bgādkpāt* letters, nor have I indicated the indistinct vowel; thus would be transliterated simply *dahbā* (rather than, for example, *dahèbhā* or *dahèbhâ*).

### Miscellaneous notes

I believe that it was Michael Cook who somewhere commented that a person can only think perspicuously in one system of dating at a time. I have chosen to think in A.D., and all dates are given in that system unless clearly marked otherwise.

English translations of Qur'ānic passages are taken or adapted from Arthur Arberry's magnificent rendering of the Qur'ān's meaning.<sup>(17)</sup> English translations of biblical passages, when not translated directly from the versions encountered, lean on those of the Revised Standard Version.<sup>(18)</sup>

The current trend in English theological writing is to avoid the capitalization of pronouns referring to God. However, Arabic texts tend to be pronoun-rich and antecedent-poor, and it is a great help to a struggling translator to be allowed to use capital letters in order to specify the antecedent of some pronouns. I use "He," "His," and "Him" in referring to *Allāh* (in Islamic texts) or to God the Holy Trinity or God

17. ARBERRY, *Koran* (1964).

18. As found in Herbert G. MAY and Bruce M. METZGER (eds.), *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha: Revised Standard Version*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.

the Father (in Christian ones). I do *not* capitalize pronouns referring to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, God the Word.

The text has been prepared using Gamma Productions' *Multi-Lingual Scholar* word processor, version 3.27.

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Mark N. Swanson  
Rome, Italy  
August 20, 1992

## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AB</i>	<i>Analecta Bollandiana</i>
ar.	Arabic
BL	British Library
<i>Bull. SOAS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
<i>Byz</i>	<i>Byzantion</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
c.	century
ca.	<i>circa</i>
chr.	Christian
col., cols.	column(s)
coll.	collection
Cor.	St. Paul's letters to the Corinthians
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
d.	died
Deut.	Deuteronomy
<i>DOP</i>	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
ed.	editor, edition, edited by
<i>EI</i> (1)	<i>The Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> , I-IV and Supplement, Leiden: E.J. Brill and London: Luzac & Co., 1913-38.
<i>EI</i> (2)	<i>The Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> , new edition, I-VI (incomplete), Leiden: E.J. Brill and London: Luzac & Co., 1960-.
<i>EO</i>	<i>Échos d'Orient</i>
esp.	especially
ET	English translation
f., ff.	folio(s)
fasc.	fascicle
FT	French translation
<i>GAL</i>	Carl BROCKELMANN, <i>Geschichte der arabischen Literatur</i> , I-II, Weimar: Emil Felber, 1898 and Berlin: Emil Felber, 1902. Supplemental vols. I-III, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1937-42.
Gal.	St. Paul's letter to the Galatians
<i>GAS</i>	Fuat SEZGIN, <i>Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums</i> , I-IX, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967-84.
<i>GCAL</i>	Georg GRAF, <i>Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur</i> , I-IV and index (coll. ST 118, 133, 146, 147, 172), Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1944-53.
GT	German translation
H.	<i>hiġrī</i> , year of the Hegira
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
ILOB	Institut des Lettres Orientales (Beirut)

ind.	indiction
Is.	Isaiah
<i>ISCH</i>	<i>Islamochristiana</i>
<i>ISCH</i> , "Bibliographie"	Robert CASPAR, Abdelmajid CHARFI, Miguel DE ESPALZA, Adel Théodore KHOURY, Khalil SAMIR <i>et al</i> , "Bibliographie du dialogue islamo-chretien," <i>Islamochristiana</i> 1 (1975) 125-81; 2 (1976) 187-249; 3 (1977) 255-86; 4 (1978) 247-67; 5 (1979) 299-317; 6 (1980) 259-99; 7 (1981) 299-307; 10 (1984) 273-92; 13 (1987) 173-80; 15 (1989) 169-74 . . .
IT	Italian translation
<i>JA</i>	<i>Journal Asiatique</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
Jer.	Jeremiah
<i>JSAI</i>	<i>Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam</i>
LT	Latin translation
LXX	The Septuagint
M.	(Coptic) Year of the Martyrs
<i>Maš</i>	<i>al-Mašriq</i> (المشرق)
MS, MSS	manuscript(s)
<i>Mus</i>	<i>Le Muséon</i>
<i>MUSJ</i>	<i>Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph</i>
<i>MW</i>	<i>The Muslim World</i>
NF	nouvel fonds (as in the newly discovered MSS of St. Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai)
<i>OC</i>	<i>Oriens Christianus</i>
<i>OCA</i>	<i>Orientalia Christiana Analecta</i>
<i>OCP</i>	<i>Orientalia Christiana Periodica</i>
<i>OECT</i>	Oxford Early Christian Texts
<i>OkS</i>	<i>Ostkirchliche Studien</i>
or.	oriental
p., pp.	page(s)
pap	paper
par., parr.	and parallel(s) (esp. in the synoptic gospels)
<i>ParOr</i>	<i>Parole de l'Orient</i>
PAC	Patrimoine Arabe Chrétien (التراث العربي المسيحي)
perg	parchment
Pet.	Peter, as in the letters of St. Peter
<i>PG</i>	J.-P. MIGNE (ed.), <i>Patrologiae cursus completus</i> , Series Graeca, 161 vols., Petit Montrouge: 1857-66.
PISAI	Pontificio Istituto di Studi Arabi e d'Islamistica (Rome)
PISO	Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium (Rome)
<i>PO</i>	<i>Patrologia Orientalis</i>
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien
<i>REI</i>	<i>Revue des Études Islamiques</i>

<i>ROC</i>	<i>Revue de l'Orient Chrétien</i>
Rom.	St. Paul's letter to the Romans
<i>RSO</i>	<i>Rivista degli Studi Orientali</i>
SC	Sources Chrétiennes
<i>SI</i>	<i>Studia Islamica</i>
SS	Studia Sinaitica
ST	Studi e Testi
subs.	subsidia
syr.	Syriac
trans.	translator(s), translation, translated by
<i>ZDMG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>
Zech.	Zechariah

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#### Note:

The works listed below have been given an abbreviated designation of the form AUTHOR or EDITOR, "Keyword" or *Keyword* (Date). A problem arises in dealing with works written by one person and edited (and frequently introduced and commented upon) by another. In Arabic Christian studies such works are normally listed by *editor*, a practice which will be followed below. Thus "SAMIR, *Miṣbāḥ* (1970)" refers to Samir Khalil Samir's edition of Abū I-Barakāt Ibn Kabar's *Miṣbāḥ al-ẓulmah*. In Islamic studies, however, it is more customary to refer to books by author, especially since many classical texts printed in the Middle East have no editor in the Western sense of the word. In the list below I have therefore tended to list classical Islamic texts by *author*. Thus "ṬABARĪ, *Tafsīr* (1955-)" refers to the Dār al-Ma'ārif (Cairo) edition of the *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, edited by Maḥmūd Muḥammad Ṣākīr and Aḥmad Muḥammad Ṣākīr (whose names are of course given in the full bibliographical entry). A certain inconsistency results, but I hope that the result is reasonably clear and practical.

\* \* \* \* \*

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### Note

I make no attempt here to give a complete listing of manuscripts, but refer to those manuscripts to which I had access and of which I made use.

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## Chapter One

### THE SOURCES

#### Introduction and Orientation

The present study is an attempt to describe the earliest Arabic Christian-Muslim controversy over the crucifixion of Christ in a thematically and narratively coherent way. One result of this attempt is that citations from one and the same author, and often one and the same text, will be scattered throughout the study. This first chapter is an attempt to compensate for later dispersal of material by offering a brief overview of the sources. Specialists in Arabic Christian and Islamic studies will thus be able to see quickly which authors and texts I have taken into account, and how I have dealt with those questions of provenance, authenticity, date, and so on, for which no scholarly consensus yet exists. Interested non-specialists may find some guidance to the most important primary and secondary literature. To most readers, however, I would recommend leaving this chapter for later reference, and beginning immediately with Chapter Two.

The Arabic apologetic and polemical texts of the eighth and ninth Christian centuries have been surveyed a number of times. The "Bibliographie du dialogue islamo-chrétien"<sup>(1)</sup> published since 1975 in installments in the journal *Islamochristiana* represents the most ambitious recent attempt to systematically list *both* Christian and Muslim texts.<sup>(2)</sup> For the Christian material, Georg Graf's *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur* (GCAL) remains the basic reference work despite the fact that it is now nearly fifty years old. Its information concerning texts of the eighth and ninth Christian centuries is corrected and updated by a number of recent works, notably Joseph Nasrallah's survey of the Arabic Melkite literature of the period,<sup>(3)</sup> and Benedicte Landron's study of Arabic Nestorian apologetic and polemical literature.<sup>(4)</sup> Mention should also be made of Rachid Haddad's dissertation on the doctrine of the Trinity in ancient Arabic Christian theology,<sup>(5)</sup> in which he brought to light a number of previously unstudied texts and shed new light on under-studied ones. On the Muslim side, by far the best recent survey is Abdelmajid Charfi's Arabic dissertation.<sup>(6)</sup>

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1. ISCH, "Bibliographie."

2. In addition, a helpful introduction to a number of these texts is GAUDEUL, *Encounters* (1984).

3. NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988).

4. LANDRON, "Apologétique" (1978).

5. HADDAD, *Trinité* (1985), the publication of a dissertation submitted in 1974.

6. CHARFI, *Radd* (1986). See also ANAWATI, "Polémique" (1969), 379–415, and BOUAMAMA, *Littérature* (1988).

It is not my intention in this chapter to gather together and update all the information contained in these surveys, so as to produce a new bibliography of eighth- and ninth-century Arabic Christian and Islamic controversial texts. That will be a task for others.<sup>(7)</sup> My purpose here is the limited one of listing, thoroughly but concisely, those Arabic sources important to the theme of the present essay.

The sources are listed by author, where known. Brief bibliographies are given, including: (a) references to the text(s) in the general surveys mentioned above, (b) references to convenient lists and descriptions of manuscripts, (c) the best editions and translations of texts, and (d) the secondary literature most helpful for their study. These bibliographies are not intended to be exhaustive, but rather as *keys* to the study of the texts. A few remarks are offered on questions of authenticity, authorship, and date where unclear or disputed. Finally, the texts or passages relevant to the present study are listed and very briefly described.

Christian and Islamic materials are listed separately. Within each section the sources are grouped into categories giving some sense of the shape of the literature, which in turn are arranged in rough chronological order.

## I. CHRISTIAN TEXTS

### A. The Earliest Witnesses: Arabic Christian Apologetics in the Eighth Century

While the origins of an Arabic Christian churchly literature are shrouded in mystery,<sup>(8)</sup> the oldest texts which we possess come from the second half of the eighth Christian century and belong to the "Ancient South Palestinian" archive of translations and original works produced in the Melkite monasteries of Palestine and Sinai.<sup>(9)</sup> The earliest unambiguous date that we have for the production of an Arabic Christian text is Rabi' I, 155 H. = February/March 772, which is when "The Story of the Holy Fathers Killed at Sinai and Rā'yah"<sup>(10)</sup> was translated from Greek into Arabic, according to colophons preserved in BL or. 5019 and Sinai ar. 542.<sup>(11)</sup> A work which will be discussed below, *Fī taṭlīṭ Allāh al-wāḥid* ("On the Triune God") of Sinai ar.

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7. Plans for a "revised Graf" continue to be made. See SAMIR, "Nouvelle histoire" (1982). For the time being, bibliographical updates for the Christian materials are provided in the *Bulletin d'Arabe Chrétien/Bibliographie des auteurs Arabes Chrétiens*, edited by Emilio Platti.
  8. Debate has been sharp over the issue of whether written Arabic translations of the scriptures existed before the rise of Islam. For orientation, see SAMIR, "Turāṭ" (1982) 10–13, or GRIFFITH, "Gospel" (1985) 153–58.
  9. "Ancient South Palestinian" (ASP) is a technical term coined by Joshua Blau. See BLAU, *Grammar* (1966–67), esp. I, 21–33 which is practically a catalogue of the works of the ASP archive. Sidney Griffith has devoted a great deal of attention to this archive; see, for example, GRIFFITH, "Kerygma" (1985), "Arabic" (1986), "Monks" (1988), and "Anthony David" (1989).
  10. GCAL I, 520; NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988), 166–67.
  11. For the text of the colophons, see GRIFFITH, "Account" (1985), 337–39.

154, is the oldest dated *original* Arabic Christian composition that has been preserved. Unfortunately its date requires some interpretation, but it corresponds at the latest to ca. 788.<sup>(12)</sup>

Of course, Arabic-language conversations on religious matters had been taking place between Christians and Muslims before the end of the eighth century, as is reflected in a number of Greek and Syriac texts. The famous Chapter 100/101 of the *Liber de haeresibus* of John of Damascus (d. ca. 750) alludes to such conversations and displays a fair knowledge of Islam.<sup>(13)</sup> Several texts take the literary form of a debate between a Christian and a Muslim. For two of these debates the Muslim interlocutor may be identified: the Syriac account of a discussion which took place in 644 between the Syrian patriarch John and "the emir of the Hagarenes," who may be identified as 'Umayr b. Sa'd, governor of Hims,<sup>(14)</sup> and the conversations of the Nestorian catholicos Timothy I (catholicos 780-823) with the Abbasid caliph al-Mahdī (caliph 775-85), of which he provided a Syriac "transcript" in a letter to the priest Sargīs.<sup>(15)</sup> In other instances the Muslim interlocutor is described but cannot be precisely identified, as in the Syriac text of a dispute between a monk of Beit-Hālê and a follower of the emir Maslamah (d. 738),<sup>(16)</sup> or Timothy's Syriac report of his debate with a Muslim Aristotelian philosopher.<sup>(17)</sup> In other texts the Muslim interlocutor is not named or described at all, as in the (Syriac) controversy of the Jacobite stylite John of Litarba (d. ca. 737-38) and an unnamed "opponent,"<sup>(18)</sup> or the (Greek) dialogue between a Christian and a "Saracen" traditionally attributed to John

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12. See below, p. 5.

13. Ed. KOTTER, *Liber* (1981), 60-67, and see SAHAS, *Heresy* (1970) for a study and ET.

14. Ed. and trans. NAU, "Colloque" (1915). The "emir," named by Syriac chronicles as "Amrû" bar Sa'd, has been identified as 'Umayr b. Sa'd al-Anṣārī in CRONE/COOK, *Hagarism* (1977), 162 (note 11), and in SAMIR, "Interlocuteur" (1984).

15. See below, pp. 6-8.

16. This dispute is preserved in a single manuscript, Diyarbakir 95, now at the episcopal residence in Mardin. For a few snippets of information about the work see CRONE/COOK, *Hagarism* (1977), 12-13, 17-18, 163 (note 23). In 1984 JAGER ("Intended Edition" (1987)) announced that he was preparing an edition.

17. Ed. and FT: H. CHEIKHO, *Dialectique* (1983). Another ed. and ET is the unpublished M.A. thesis of Thomas R. HURST: "Letter 40 of the Nestorian Patriarch Timothy I (727-823): an Edition and Translation," Washington, D.C.: the Catholic University of America, 1981.

Cheikho has some doubts about the historicity of the debate. "It could be that Timothy, desiring to write on the theme of language about God, invented this personage so that his treatise would be read by Christians and by Muslims, especially those of the court with whom our patriarch had friendly relations." H. CHEIKHO, *Dialectique* (1983), 59.

18. Ed. and FT: SUERMANN, "Jôhannân" (1988-89), and see also his "Controverse" (1989).

of Damascus.<sup>(19)</sup> In the tenth chapter of Theodore bar Kōnī's *Scholion* (which can be dated no later than the end of the eighth century), a debate between a Christian and a Muslim is concealed behind the form of a dialogue between a teacher (*malpānā*) and a student (*eskolyōn*).<sup>(20)</sup> Whatever doubts we may have as to whether or not a particular dialogue actually took place as reported, there can be no doubt that these texts reflect Christian experience of conversation with Muslims, and present what the writers think *ought* to have been said.

Two works will be described below: *Fī taṭlīṭ Allāh al-wāḥid* of Sinai ar. 154, a rich and appealing text from the earliest years of Christian apologetic production in Arabic,<sup>(21)</sup> and the dialogue of the catholicos Timothy with the caliph al-Mahdī, an outstanding early apology which, although first circulated in Syriac, came to play an important role in the shaping of the Arabic Christian apologetic repertory.

## 1. "On the Triune God" (*Fī taṭlīṭ Allāh al-wāḥid*)

### Selected Literature:

GCAL II, 27–28 (#6). ISCH, "Bibliographie" 12.4. HADDAD, *Trinité* (1985), 52–53. NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988), 145–46 (#5).

#### Manuscript

Sinai Arabic 154, ff. 99<sup>r</sup>–139<sup>v</sup>, is the sole known manuscript of the work. It is described in SAMIR, "Apology" (1990).

#### Editions, translation

GIBSON, *Treatise* (1899), 74\*–107\* [ET 2–36]. A new (corrected and more complete) edition of the work is being prepared by Samir Khalil SAMIR.

#### Additional studies

SAMIR, "Apology" (1990). Idem, "Apologie" (1990–91).

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19. Ed. and ET: SAHAS, *Heresy* (1970), 99–122, 142–55. See also A.-T. KHOURY, *Théologiens* (1969), 68–82.

20. Ed. SCHER, *Bar Kōnī* (1910–12), II, 231–84 [FT HESPEL/DRAGUET, *Scolies* (1981–82), II, 172–210]. See also GRIFFITH, "Chapter 10" (1981), where a discussion of the date of the *Scholion* is found at pp. 161–64. I suspect that the date of 1103 an. Graec. (= 791–92 A.D.) given in some manuscripts is the date of a *copy* rather than the date of the work's composition, for which it therefore gives us no more than a *terminus ad quem*.

21. If the date of 788 A.D. for this text is correct, it could be that some of Theodore Abū Qurrah's earliest compositions, such as his "On the Existence of the Creator and the True Religion" (see below, p. 12), are older still.

This magnificent work, addressed to Muslims and written in beautiful language that evokes the Qur'an without ever falling into slavish imitation, was misleadingly named *Fī taṭlīṭ Allāh al-wāḥid*/"On the Triune Nature of God by its first editor. While for the sake of convenience I shall continue to use Mrs. Gibson's Arabic title (with my own English translation), in fact the work is an apology for the veracity of Christianity, with an emphasis on *christology*.

The date of the apology is given in a passage discovered by Samir, which reads: "If this religion were not truly from God, it would not have been established (*lam yaṭbut*) and would not have stood (*lam yaqūm* [*sic*]) for seven hundred and forty-six years."<sup>(22)</sup> The text poses a riddle: which event in the New Testament narrative is to be understood as the "establishment" of "this religion"? A plausible hypothesis is that it corresponds to the "disestablishment" of the religion of Judaism, which, for reasons that will be presented below,<sup>(23)</sup> is an event most probably coinciding with the crucifixion of Christ. If this is understood to have taken place on March 23, 42 A.D. (in accordance with the chronological framework of the Alexandrian world era of Annianos),<sup>(24)</sup> a date of 788 A.D. results for the composition of the apology.

For the purposes of this study, two passages are especially significant:

1. Sinai ar. 154, ff. 102<sup>v</sup>-109<sup>r</sup><sup>(25)</sup> deals at considerable length with humankind's fall under the dominion of Satan and its redemption through the Incarnation of Christ. The cross is mentioned briefly, but centrally, at ff. 107<sup>v</sup>-108<sup>r</sup>.<sup>(26)</sup>
2. ff. 137<sup>v</sup>-139<sup>v</sup><sup>(27)</sup> deals specifically with the cross: its predictions and types in the Old Testament, and the cross as the sign of Christ at his *parousia*.

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22. ولو لم يكن هذا الدين حقاً من الله، لم يثبت ولم يقوم منذ سبع مئة سنة وست وأربعين سنة. f. 110<sup>v</sup>/12-14.

23. In the discussion of *al-Ġāmi' wuḡūh al-īmān*, below, p. 35.

24. For evidence supporting the plausibility of this assumption, see SWANSON, "Dating" (1992). For another possibility, see SAMIR, "Apologie" (1990-91) where it is suggested that the apology might date from as early as 738 A.D., assuming (a) that the "establishment of Christianity" corresponds to the Incarnation of Christ (b) as calculated according to the Melkite Era of the Incarnation.

25. GIBSON, *Treatise* (1899), 78\*-85\* [ET 6-12].

26. *Ibid.*, 84\* [ET 12].

27. Passage not edited by Gibson.

## 2. The Dialogue of the Catholicos Timothy I (780-823) and the Caliph al-Mahdī (775-85)

### Selected Literature:

*GCAL* II, 114–18 (#2, with extensive bibliography also with respect to the Syriac original). *ISCH*, "Bibliographie" 12.5, 17.8. LANDRON, "Apologétique" (1978), 72–84. HADDAD, *Trinité* (1985), 30–32.

#### Manuscripts

See *GCAL* II, 116–118; mention of additional MSS and a proposed stemma in CASPAR, "Versions" (1977), 112–13.

#### Editions, translations

(Original) Syriac text: MINGANA, "Apology" (1928) [photographic reproduction of Mingana syr. 17 and ET].

Syriac précis: VAN ROEY, "Apologétique" (1946) [ed. and LT from Paris syr. 306].

Arabic précis in 27 questions: CASPAR, "Versions" (1977), 107–75 [ed. and FT from Paris ar. 82 (base); Paris ar. 215; Beirut, Bib.Or. 548; Jerusalem, Holy Sepulchre 101].

Longer Arabic version: PUTMAN/SAMIR, *Église* (1975) [ed. and FT from Beirut Bib. Or. 622].

#### Additional studies

BIDAWID, *Lettres* (1966).<sup>(28)</sup>

In 781 or 782 the Nestorian catholicos Timothy held a lengthy theological discussion in Arabic with the Abbasid caliph al-Mahdī, and sometime between 786 and 795 he sent a Syriac report of this encounter to the priest Sargīs.<sup>(29)</sup> It was not long before Timothy's discussion, preserved in a Syriac report, commenced its return into Arabic. Passages from the discussion appear in the *beta*-recension of the Arabic dialogue of Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī, for which the manuscript evidence reaches back to the tenth century.<sup>(30)</sup> At some point -- we do not know when -- an Arabic resumé of the discussion in the form of twenty-seven "questions" was made, of which the oldest copy known, Paris ar. 82 (ff. 73<sup>r</sup>-94<sup>v</sup>), dates to the 14th century.<sup>(31)</sup> Two other recensions are found in Paris ar. 215, an Egyptian manuscript written in 1590: one

28. I have not seen the Ph.D. dissertation of Thomas R. HURST: "The Syriac Letters of Timothy I (727–823): a Study in Christian–Muslim Controversy," Washington, D.C.: the Catholic University of America, 1986.

29. On these dates see PUTMAN/SAMIR, *Église* (1975), 184–85, CASPAR, "Versions" (1977), 116–17, and the literature cited there. The date 781 or 782 presupposes the essential authenticity of the debate. If the work had its genesis in the patriarch's study, as Nau believed (NAU, "Compte-rendu" (1929)), it would probably have been written after the accession of Hārūn al-Rašīd in 786.

30. See below, pp. 26–28.

31. Ed. and FT: CASPAR, "Versions" (1977).

quite faithful to the Syriac original, although presented in the form of thirty-four questions asked by the caliph al-Ma'mūn of Abū Qurrah (!),<sup>(32)</sup> and one loosely based on the dialogue, in twelve questions asked by the caliph al-Mahdī of "the catholicos."<sup>(33)</sup> In relatively recent times a much fuller and more literal Arabic translation of the original Syriac report was made.<sup>(34)</sup>

Since the only recension of the text which clearly comes from the period under study here is the *Syriac* text, it may seem strange to have it included in the present list. Given, however, the probability that the Syriac text reflects an Arabic "oral original," and the fact that it quickly began to influence Arabic apologetic texts, I have decided to include it in this list of Arabic works. The Syriac text of Timothy's dialogue and its Arabic recensions offer us a precious record of how Christians in the closing decades of the eighth century defended their faith – or how they thought they *should* have defended their faith -- in Arabic conversations with Muslims. Therefore they merit inclusion here.

One lengthy passage of the dialogue is of special relevance to the present study, and is outlined below.<sup>(35)</sup>

1. Why do Christians prostrate themselves to the cross? (113/1/4 :: 175-82 :: 29)

2. Did Christ die on the cross?

(a) Can God die? (113/2/18 :: 183-85 :: –)

(b) The Qur'ān on the death of Christ. al-Mahdī: *al-Nisā'* (4):157!

Timothy: *Āl 'Imrān* (3):55, *Maryam* (19):33! (114/1/4 :: 186-90 :: 30)

(c) Old Testament prophecies of the crucifixion. (114/1/21 :: 191-98 :: 31)

(d) The issue of *tašbīh*. (114/2/16 :: 199-202 :: 32)

(e) Was not Christ too highly honored to be crucified? Christ's freely-chosen death. (115/2/1 :: 203-6 :: 33) This leads directly to:

3. Christ's freely willed death and the guilt of his Jewish crucifiers

(a) al-Mahdī: No blame to the Jews! Timothy: Look to their intentions! (116/1/8 :: 207-9 :: 34)

32. ff. 122<sup>r</sup>–154<sup>r</sup>. See *GCAL* II, 117–18 (c).

33. ff. 176<sup>v</sup>–185<sup>r</sup>. See *GCAL* II, 118 (d), and CASPAR, "Versions" (1977), 110–11.

34. Ed. and FT: PUTMAN/SAMIR, *Église* (1975). Immediately after the title in the copy of the text preserved in Beirut, Bib. Or. 662 (ca. 1900), we read: *... قد ترجمت حديثاً من اللغة السريانية إلى العربية* ("... which was translated recently from Syriac into Arabic"); *ibid.*, 7\*.

35. References are made to: page/column/line number of the Syriac text as reproduced by Mingana; then, after the double colon, to the numbered *versets* in the translation/edition of Putman/Samir; finally, again after a double colon, to the numbered paragraphs in the edition and translation of Caspar.

(b) The dilemma: Was it Christ's will to be crucified, or not? If Christ willed to be crucified, the Jews should not be blamed. If he did not so will, he was weak. (116/1/21 :: 210 :: 35a)

(c) Counter-questions #1 and 2: Satan's rebellion, Adam's expulsion from Paradise. Application. (116/2/10 :: 211-216 :: 35b)

(d) Counter-question #3: the warrior killed in *ḡihād*. (117/2/15 :: -- :: 36a)

(e) Christ's freedom, the salvific necessity of his death. (118/1/15 :: -- :: 36b-37a)

(f) Counter-(example) #4: Joseph sold by his brothers. (119/2/2 :: -- :: 37b)

(g) Counter-question #5: the palace destroyed by an enemy. (119/2/19 :: -- :: 38)

In addition, there are a number of brief references to the death of Christ elsewhere in the dialogue. Note may be made of the following passages:

1. In defending the Christian scriptures against the charge of falsification, Timothy argues that *if* the Christians had made changes in their scriptures, they would have changed the things considered "unworthy," such as Christ's growth in stature and wisdom; his food, drink, and weariness; his anger, ignorance, and prayer; and *his suffering, crucifixion, and burial*. (130/1/14 :: 265 :: --)

2. In the course of his famous response to al-Mahdī's question "What do you say about Muḥammad?" (133/1/16 :: 158-68 :: 46-50) Timothy explained that just as God gave victory to Muḥammad over the Persians because of their idolatry, He gave him victory over the Byzantines because they ascribed suffering and death to God in the flesh. (134/2/5 :: 167 :: 49)

3. According to the Syriac text, Timothy returns to intra-Christian polemic at the end of the dialogue, rejecting the (Melkite and Jacobite) statement that "God suffered and died in the flesh" and eliciting the caliph's judgement that in this matter the Nestorian doctrine (that "it is the human nature which God the Word put on from us that suffered and died") is closer to the truth. (159/1/17 :: -- :: --)

## B. Three Christian *Mutakallims* of the Early Ninth Century

We now turn our attention now to three of the earliest and most creative of the Christian *mutakallimūn*, i.e. those apologists who engaged, from the Christian side, in the Arabic theological discourse which the Muslims called *kalām*. In an "ecumenically" gratifying way they represent each of the major Christian confessions found in the *Dār al-Islām*: Theodore Abū Qurrah was a Melkite, Ḥabīb b. Ḥidmah Abū Rā'īṭah a Jacobite, and 'Ammār al-Baṣrī a Nestorian. Together their careers span a half-century, from the end of the 8th century to the year 838 and perhaps beyond.

### 1. Theodore Abū Qurrah (ca. 755? - ca. 830?)

#### Selected Literature:

GCAL II, 7–26. ISCH, "Bibliographie" 12.8 (and 13.6, 16.1). HADDAD, *Trinité* (1985), 53–55. NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988), 104–34.

#### Manuscripts

See NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988), 117–24, and add three of the newly discovered manuscripts at St. Catherine's monastery in Sinai: Sinai ar. NF perg. 12 and 19, and NF pap. 4 (MEÏMARÈS, *Catalogue* (1985), 22\*, 25\*, 39\*).

#### Editions, translations

"Chapters on Prostration to the Icons": ARENDZEN, *Libellus* (1897) [ed. and LT from BL or. 4950]. GRAF, *Abū Qurra* (1910), 278–333 [GT of Arendzen's ed.]. DICK, *Icônes* (1986) [new ed. from BL or. 4950 and Sinai ar. 330]. Sidney GRIFFITH's ET and Paola PIZZO's IT will soon be published.

Ten treatises: BACHA, *Mayāmīr* (1904) [ed. from Saint-Sauveur N.C. 392]. BACHA, *Traité* (1905) [FT of "On the Law and the Gospel and the Chalcedonian Faith"]. GRAF, *Abū Qurra* (1910), 88–277 [GT of Bacha's ed.].

"On the Existence of the Creator and the True Religion": CHEIKHO, "Wuğūd" (1912) [ed. from Dayr al-Šīr 373]. GRAF, *Traktat* (1913) [GT of Cheikho's ed.]. DICK, *Créateur* (1982) [new ed. from Dayr al-Šīr 373, with an extensive introduction on the author's life and work].

Two treatises: DICK, "Écrits" (1959) 53–67 [ed. and FT of the "Confession" of Sinai ar. 549 and 561, and of the "Apology" of Sinai ar. 447].

"On Christ's Freely Chosen Death": GRIFFITH, "Sayings" (1979) [ed. and ET from Sinai ar. 72]. SAMIR, "Ṣalb" (1984) [new ed. from Sinai ar. 72].

#### Additional studies

GRAF, *Abū Qurra* (1910), 1–87. RIVIÈRE, "Précurseur" (1914). DICK, "Continuateur" (1963). GRIFFITH, *Theology* (1978). Idem, "Tract" (1985). SAMIR, "Abū Qurrah," (1984). Idem, "Littérature" (1990), 476–81. GRIFFITH, "Faith" (1990).

Theodore Abū Qurrah, monk of the monastery of Mar Saba and later Melkite bishop of Ḥarrān, has the greatest reputation of all the Christian apologists studied

here. Of great reknown in the East for his skill in controversy with Muslims,<sup>(36)</sup> thanks to Greek translations/adaptations of some of his writings<sup>(37)</sup> he is the one major Christian apologist of this study who has enjoyed some name-recognition in the West. In the course of a literary career which may have begun as early as the 780's and have extended into and beyond the 820's, he wrote a number of treatises which deal in part or in whole with the crucifixion and death of Christ. These are grouped below by theme:

1. The treatise "Chapters on Prostration to the Icons"<sup>(38)</sup> is a response to accusations of idolatry by Jews and Muslims. A number of passages deal in some way with the crucifixion of Christ:<sup>(39)</sup>

(a) Ch. 2, on the foolishness of the chief articles of Christian faith in the eyes of non-believers [280-81].

(b) Ch. 16, #17-22, the story of the picture of the crucified Christ which the Jews of Tiberias had made [314].

(c) and especially Ch. 24, on the veneration of the icon of the crucified Christ [330-33].<sup>(40)</sup>

2. The content of the treatise that, for convenience, I call "On the Necessity of Redemption"<sup>(41)</sup> is summarized in the title given it in the manuscript: "A treatise concerning the fact that no one is forgiven his sin except through the pains of Christ, which came upon him for the sake of the people; and that whoever does not believe in these pains and offer them to the Father for his trespasses will never have forgiveness of his trespasses."<sup>(42)</sup> The treatise is written specifically with Muslims in mind, and aims to convince them of the

36. For the text alleged to be a description of his debate at the court of al-Ma'mūn, see below, pp. 28-30. Abū Qurrah's reputation as a debater with Muslims was such that the debates of *other* Christian apologists came to be ascribed to him. Thus Abū Qurrah displaces the catholicos Timothy in Paris ar. 215 (1590 A.D.), ff. 122<sup>r</sup>-154<sup>r</sup>, and Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī in Sbath I004 (18th c.).

37. Ed. and LT: PG 94, 1586-95; 96, 1336-48; 97, 1469-1609.

38. ميامر في السجود للصور. GCAL II, 13-14 (#11); NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988), 117-18 (#1). Ed. DICK, *Icons* (1986) [GT (of Arendzen's edition) GRAF, *Abū Qurra* (1910), 278-333].

39. The divisions are those of Dick's modern edition. The corresponding pages of Graf's German translation are added at the end of the line in square brackets.

40. Other references to the cross are found at Ch. 1, #2 [278-79], Ch. 7, #5 [288], and Ch. 8, #17 [291].

41. GCAL II, 13 (#5); NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988), 119 (#2f). Ed. BACHA, *Mayāmīr* (1904), 83-91 [GT GRAF, *Abū Qurra* (1910), 169-77; FT (extracts) RIVIÈRE, "Précurseur" (1914)]. Following the example of DICK (*Créateur* (1982), xv-xxi and 64-73), I will frequently abbreviate or paraphrase the lengthy titles of Abū Qurrah's treatises.

42. ميمر في أنه لا يغفر لأحد خطيئته إلا بأوجاع المسيح، التي حلت به في شأن الناس؛ وأن من لا يؤمن بهذه الأوجاع ويقربها للآب عن ذنوبه فلا مغفرة لذنوبه أبداً.

necessity of the redemptive death of one who was truly God.

Parallels to and occasional amplifications of the material in this treatise are found in:

(a) The treatises "On the Possibility of the Incarnation"<sup>(43)</sup> and "On the Divinity of the Son"<sup>(44)</sup>, which together with "On the Necessity of Redemption" form a linked apologetic set.

(b) Abū Qurrah's Nestorian- and Jacobite-directed defences of the Chalcedonian conception of the death of Christ, especially his "On the Death of Christ,"<sup>(45)</sup> with a number of parallels in "The Letter to David the Jacobite."<sup>(46)</sup> In these treatises, Abū Qurrah attempts to demonstrate that the Nestorian and Jacobite christologies as applied to the death of Christ are soteriologically inadequate.

(c) Other material pertinent to Abū Qurrah's apologetic doctrine of redemption is to be found scattered in the Greek *opuscula* attributed to him. Of particular relevance is the compilation of "Abū Qurran" material preserved as *opusculum* 1, "The Five Enemies from which the Savior Delivered Us,"<sup>(47)</sup>

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43. ميمر في الردّ على من ينكر الله التجسّد والحلول فيما أحبّ يحلّ فيه من خلقه، وأنّه في حلوله في الجسد المأخوذ من مريم المطهّرة بمنزلة جلوسه على العرش في السماء ("A treatise responding to the one who denies the possibility of God's Incarnation and dwelling in whatever creature He likes; and that His dwelling in the body taken from Mary the Purified is analogous to his being seated upon the throne in heaven"). *GCAL* II, 13 (#6); NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988), 120 (#2j). Ed. BACHA, *Mayāmir* (1904), 180–86 [GT GRAF, *Abū Qurra* (1910), 178–184]; see especially 184–85 [182–83].
44. ميمر يحقّق أنّ الله ابناً هو عدله في الجوهر ولم يزل معه ("A treatise confirming that God has a consubstantial and co-eternal Son"). *GCAL* II, 13 (#7); NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988), 119 (#2g). Ed. BACHA, *Mayāmir* (1904), 91–104 [GT GRAF, *Abū Qurra* (1910), 184–98]; see especially pp. 98–104 [192–98].
45. ميمر في موت المسيح، وأنّا إذا قلنا إنّ المسيح مات عنا، إنّما نقول إنّ الابن الأزليّ المولود من الأب قبل الدهور هو الذي مات عنا، لا في طبيعته الإلهيّة بل في طبيعته الانسانيّة، وكيف يُعقل هذا الموت، وأنّه يحسن أن يقال على الابن الأزليّ في الجهة التي تقوله عليه الأرثوذكسيّة ("A treatise on the death of Christ, that when we say 'Christ died for us' we mean that that the eternal Son begotten of the Father before the ages is the one who died for us, not in his divine nature but in his human nature, and how this death is to be conceived, and that it is appropriate that the eternal Son be spoken of in the way in which Orthodoxy speaks of him"). *GCAL* II, 13 (#8); NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988), 118–19 (#2c). Ed. BACHA, *Mayāmir* (1904), 48–70 [GT GRAF, *Abū Qurra*, (1910) 198–223].
46. رسالة في إجابة مسألة كتبها أبو قرّة القديس إلى صديق له كان يعقوبيّاً فصار أرثوذكسيّاً عند رده ("A letter answering a question, which the sainted Abū Qurrah wrote to a friend who had been a Jacobite, but who became Orthodox upon receipt of Abū Qurrah's answer"). *GCAL* II, 13 (#10); NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988), 119–20 (#2h). Ed. BACHA, *Mayāmir* (1904), 104–39 [GT GRAF, *Abū Qurra* (1910), 239–77]; see especially pp. 120–21 [256–57], 137–38 [274–75].
47. Ed. and LT: *PG* 97, 1461–70. On this work as an awkward but forward-pointing compilation dependent on Abū Qurrah's genuine writings, see RIVIÈRE, "Précurseur"

viz. death, the Devil, the curse of the Law and damnation, sin, and hell.<sup>(48)</sup>

3. In his treatises devoted to demonstrating the truth of the Christian religion, Abū Qurrah frequently uses the crucifixion of the Son of God to stress the *scandalous* nature of Christian belief and practice. Then the *fact* of Christianity's spread, in spite of the scandal, points to its divine character and origin. The following treatises may be noted:

(a) The Appendix (Ch. 16) to "On the Existence of the Creator, and the True Religion."<sup>(49)</sup>

(b) "On the Confirmation of the Gospel."<sup>(50)</sup>

(c) Sharing many features with these two Arabic treatises is Abū Qurrah's Greek *opusculum* 21, "That Christian Teaching is Confirmed through the Preaching of Those of No Account," in the form of a dialogue with a Muslim *mutakallim*.<sup>(51)</sup> It was probably translated from an Arabic original. A Georgian translation also exists.<sup>(52)</sup>

(d) The first part of "On the Law and the Gospel and the Chalcedonian Faith"<sup>(53)</sup> is a discussion of the truth of the Christian faith addressed to Jews. It contains a number of arguments parallel to those found in the works listed above (a-c).

(1914), 350–60, where a number of extracts in French are found.

48. See also *op.* 7, "The Struggle of Christ with the Devil" (ed. and LT: *PG* 97, 1523–28) and *op.* 41, "What is Death, and How has Death Been Put to Death?" (ed. and LT: *PG* 97, 1597–1600).

49. في وجود الخالق والدين القويم. *GCAL* 11, 14–15 (#12); NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988), 120–22 (#3). Ed. DICK, *Créateur* (1982), 259–70 [GT (of Cheikho's edition) GRAF, *Traktat* (1913), 58–66].

50. ميمر في تحقيق الإنجيل، وأنَّ كلَّ ما لا يحقِّقه الإنجيل فهو باطل ("A treatise on the confirmation of the Gospel, and that everything that does not confirm the Gospel is void"). *GCAL* 11, 12 (#2); NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988), 119 (#2d). Ed. BACHA, *Mayāmir* (1904), 71–75 [FT BACHA, "Traité" (1905); GT GRAF, *Abū Qurra* (1910), 128–33]; see especially pp. 73–75 [GT 130–33].

51. Ed. and LT: *PG* 97, 1547–52 [French summary in A.-T. KHOURY, *Théologiens* (1969), 97–98].

52. See *ISCH*, "Bibliographie" 16.1.2 (d) (in *ISCH* 6 (1980), 291).

53. ميمر في تحقيق ناموس موسى المقدس والأنبياء الذين تنبأوا على المسيح والإنجيل الطاهر الذي نقله إلى الأمم تلاميذ المسيح المولود من مريم العذراء، وتحقيق الأرثوذكسية التي ينسبها الناس إلى الخلكيدونية، وإبطال كلِّ ملَّة تنتحل النصرانية سوى هذه الملَّة ("A treatise on the confirmation of the holy Law of Moses and the prophets who prophesied Christ and the pure Gospel, which the disciples of Christ, born of the virgin Mary, transmitted to the nations; and the confirmation of the Orthodoxy which people call Chalcedonian, and the invalidation of any religious community professing to be Christian other than that community"). *GCAL* 11, 11–12 (#1); NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988), 120 (#2i). Ed. BACHA, *Mayāmir* (1904), 140–79 [FT BACHA, *Traité* (1905); GT GRAF, *Abū Qurra* (1910), 88–128].

4. The ninth-century manuscript Sinai ar. 72 preserves Abū Qurrah's Arabic response -- we may call it "On Christ's Freely Chosen Death" -- to the dilemma question: did Christ die of his own will? If so, what of the culpability of the Jews?<sup>(54)</sup> The same matter is found in the Greek *opusculum* 9<sup>(55)</sup> and also in Georgian translation.<sup>(56)</sup>

5. Finally, there are some treatises attributed to Abū Qurrah in the manuscript Sbath 1324 (1773 A.D.), the whereabouts of which, unfortunately, do not seem to be known.<sup>(57)</sup>

(a) The first treatise is a set of eight questions and answers from an encounter between Abū Qurrah and a group of Muslims at the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.<sup>(58)</sup> While the setting is suggestive, for the moment the content of the discussion is not known.

(b) The second treatise is entitled "The response to those who say that Christians believe in a weak God, because they say that Christ is God, and that he was slapped, beaten, crucified, died, and rose."<sup>(59)</sup> This probably has much in common with the treatises listed under number 3 above.

(c) The fourth is entitled "On the Confirmation of the Christian Religion,"<sup>(60)</sup> which may be identical to one of the treatises mentioned above under number 3.

(d) The fifth and sixth treatises are collections of prophesies concerning the Incarnation and the earthly career of Christ, including his passion, death, burial, and resurrection. The first of these collections is probably addressed to

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54. قول في أنَّ المسيح مات باختياره (Nasrallah's title). NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988), 122 (#5). Ed. and ET: GRIFFITH, "Sayings" (1979); revised ed.: SAMIR, "Ṣalb" (1984).

55. Ed. and LT: PG 97, 1529–30 (#9) [ET GRIFFITH, *Theology* (1978), 54].

56. See ISCH, "Bibliographie" 16.1.4 (in ISCH 6 (1980) 291).

57. For the list of these treatises in SBATH, *Bibliothèque* (1928–34), III, 115–17, recopied in SAMIR, "Abū Qurrah" (1984) 146–47, or NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988), 122–23 (#6.A).

58. مسائل وأجوبة طعن [كذا] على البرانيين ("Questions and answers to defamation (?), against the outsiders"). Sbath 1324, pp. 201–11.

59. ردَّ على الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّ النِّصَارِيَّ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِإِلَهِ ضَعِيفٍ، إِذْ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّ الْمَسِيحَ إِلَهُ، وَإِنَّهُ لَطَمَ وَضُرِبَ وَصُلِبَ وَمَاتَ وَقَامَ. Sbath 1324, pp. 212–16.

60. مقالة في تحقيق دين النصارى. Sbath 1324, pp. 220–22.

Muslims,<sup>(61)</sup> while the second is an anti-Jewish polemic.<sup>(62)</sup>

## 2. Ḥabīb b. Ḥidmah Abū Rā'īṭah (floruit ca. 815-28)

### Selected Literature:

GCAL II, 222–26. ISCH, "Bibliographie" 12.6. HADDAD, *Trinité* (1985), 55–57.

#### Manuscripts

See GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭa* (1951), ii–v (of text volume).

#### Editions, translations

GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭa* (1951) [ed. and GT of all known works]. SAMIR, "Création" (1989), 199–215 [new ed. and FT of a passage from "On the Incarnation," with study and exhaustive bibliography. Samir has prepared an edition of the entire treatise].

#### Additional studies

GRIFFITH, "Abū Rā'īṭa" (1980).

Closely contemporary with the career of the Melkite Theodore Abū Qurrah is that of the Jacobite theologian Ḥabīb b. Ḥidmah Abū Rā'īṭah; their paths nearly crossed in about the year 815, when Abū Qurrah was preaching the Chalcedonian creed in Armenia and Abū Rā'īṭah was summoned there to present the Jacobite case.<sup>(63)</sup>

Of Abū Rā'īṭah's known works, three treatises composed with Muslims in mind are of great importance for the present study:

1. "On the Incarnation"<sup>(64)</sup> is an original apologetic presentation of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation.

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61. "A مجموع من نبوّات الأنبياء لتوكيد وتحقيق تجسّد المسيح وصلبه ودفنه وقيامته وصعوده (collection of the prophets' prophecies affirming and confirming the incarnation of Christ, his crucifixion, burial, resurrection, and ascension)". Sbath 1324, pp. 223–30.

62. في نبوّات الأنبياء والإشارات والرسوم في مجيء المسيح وتجسّده، وآلامه وصلبه وقيامته وصعوده إلى السماء؛ وفي إبطال مذهب اليهود ونفيهم لكفرهم بالمسيح، ودخول الأمم في موضعهم لإيمانهم ("On the prophecies, foreshadowings and types of the prophets of Christ's advent and his incarnation, his passion, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension into heaven; and of the invalidation and negation of the religion of the Jews because of their unbelief in Christ, and the entrance of the Gentiles in their place because of their faith in and obedience to Christ"), Sbath 1324, pp. 231–41.

63. SAMIR, "Abū Rā'īṭah" (1989), 191.

64. الرسالة... في التجسّد. GCAL II, 224 (#2). Ed. and GT: GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭa* (1951), 27–64 [37–81]. Samir has prepared a new edition.

(a) In one long section of this apology (#12-17 in Graf's edition and translation)<sup>(65)</sup> Abū Rā'īṭah presents the motivation for the Incarnation, and deals with a number of questions and objections:

- (i) The motivation for the incarnation: creation and the renewal of creation (#12)
- (ii) What is the meaning of salvation from death? (#13)
- (iii) Why did God send *Himself*? (#14)
- (iv) How can one say that God died? (#15)
- (v) Was not the union of God and man in Christ undone by his death? (#16)
- (vi) Could God not have saved humankind without an incarnation? (#17)

(b) Later on in the apology, Abū Rā'īṭah responds to questions raised by Muslims about the gospels (#25-31).<sup>(66)</sup> Abū Rā'īṭah's response to the final question leads directly to a familiar dilemma-question concerning the death of Christ:

- (i) What of the cry of dereliction from the cross (Matthew 27:46)? (#31)<sup>(67)</sup>
- (ii) Was Christ crucified of his own will, or against his will? If of his own will, in what are the Jews culpable? (#32-33)<sup>(68)</sup>

2. "Testimonies from the Statement of the Torah, the Prophets, and the Saints"<sup>(69)</sup> is Abū Rā'īṭah's catalogue of Old Testament witnesses to the Trinity and prophecies of Christ's Incarnation, passion, death, and resurrection. The lengthy passage devoted to Old Testament prophecies of the passion and death of Christ is #3 in Graf's division of the text.

3. "The Apology for the Christian Religion"<sup>(70)</sup> is a general apology treating many of the apologetic *loci* common to the Christian-Muslim discussions of the time, including the following topics important to the present study:

(a) The true religion, deduced from an analysis of the motives for accepting a religion (Graf's #2-12).<sup>(71)</sup> The confession of the crucifixion proves that Christianity is not embraced through the reasoned approval of aesthetically appealing teachings (#7). Near the end of the passage we find use of a Moses/staff/Pharaoh :: Christ/cross/Satan typology (#11).

65. GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭa* (1951), 35–43 [47–56]. A new edition and FT of #12–14 is SAMIR, "Abū Rā'īṭah" (1989), 199–215.

66. GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭa* (1951), 52–60 [65–76].

67. *Ibid.*, 59–60 [74–76].

68. *Ibid.*, 60–63 [76–80].

69. شهادات من قول التوراة والأنبياء والقديسين. *GCAL* II, 225 (under #5). Ed. and GT: GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭa* (1951), 94–104 [117–26].

70. رسالة... في إثبات دين النصرانية وإثبات الثالث المقدس. *GCAL* II, 226 (#7). Ed. and GT: GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭa* (1951), 131–59 [159–94].

71. *Ibid.*, 131–40 [159–70].

(b) The motives for the Incarnation (#20-23).<sup>(72)</sup> This section contains many of the same ideas found in "On the Incarnation."

(c) The Christian practice of magnifying the cross (#24).<sup>(73)</sup>

(d) The Old Testament sacrificial system as a prefiguring of Christ's sacrifice (#27).<sup>(74)</sup>

4. In addition to these treatises written specifically with Muslims in mind, we may mention two pieces written to counter *Melkite* teaching: Abū Rā'īṭah's letters to the Armenian patrician Ashot Smbāt in defence of the Monophysite *Trisagion* formula against the criticisms of Abū Qurrah. The most important of the two letters for present purposes is the first one in Graf's edition, "A Justification of the *Trisagion* Addressed to the One 'Crucified for Us'."<sup>(75)</sup> In a passage of particular interest for the present study, Abū Rā'īṭah argues that the confession of a God "crucified for us" -- as in the interpolated *Trisagion* hymn -- is the distinguishing mark of Christians from Jews, Muslims, and others (#5-6).<sup>(76)</sup> (Abū Rā'īṭah's second, shorter "Treatise on the Justification of the *Trisagion* Addressed to the One 'Crucified for Us'"<sup>(77)</sup> adds little, for our purposes, to what we find in the longer "Justification.")

### 3. 'Ammār al-Baṣrī (floruit ca. 813?-838)

#### Selected Literature:

GCAL II, 210–211. LANDRON, "Apologetique" (1978) 99–108. HADDAD, *Trinité* (1985) 77–78.

#### Manuscripts

See HAYEK, *Apologie* (1977), 47–50.

#### Edition, translation:

HAYEK, *Apologie* (1977). M. de FENOYL has prepared a French translation of 'Ammār's works for the collection Sources Chrétiennes.

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72. Ibid., 148–53 [180–86].

73. Ibid., 153–54 [186–87].

74. Ibid., 157 [191].

75. احتجاج عن الثلاثة تقديسات للذي صلب عنا. GCAL II, 225 (#4). Ed. and GT: GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭa* (1951), 73–87 [91–109].

76. Ibid., 76–77 [94–97].

77. مقالة...في احتجاج عن الثلاثة تقديسات للذي صلب عنا. GCAL II, 225 (#6). Ed. and GT: GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭa* (1951), 88–93 [110–116].

## Additional studies

GRIFFITH, "Concept" (1982). Idem, "Ammār" (1983).

Together with the Melkite Abū Qurrah and the the Jacobite Abū Rā'īṭah, it is necessary to mention the Nestorian apologist known to us only as 'Ammār al-Baṣrī, whose mature work "The Book of the Demonstration" (*Kitāb al-burhān*) appears to have been written in 838 A.D.<sup>(78)</sup> Only two of 'Ammār's works have been preserved, but both are encyclopaedic and of the greatest importance for the development of Christian apologetics in the Islamic milieu. Both contain a number of passages of relevance to the present study.

1. "The Book of Questions and Answers"<sup>(79)</sup> is probably the earlier of the two works of 'Ammār that have been preserved. It has the form of responses to questions of the sort that a Muslim *mutakallim* may have posed. Passages of particular interest for the present study deal with:<sup>(80)</sup>

(a) The true religion (II, 6-14).<sup>(81)</sup> As in the analogous discussions of Abū Qurrah and Abū Rā'īṭah, the centrality of the cross to Christianity (see especially #7) is a factor prohibiting an easy socio-political or psychological explanation of its successful spread.

(b) The death of Christ (IV, 32-42).<sup>(82)</sup> In an exceedingly rich passage, 'Ammār analyzes:

(i) The *necessity* of Christ's death (IV, 32-34). #32: Why did Christ undergo pain, death, and humiliation? #33: Could he not have simply *preached* the resurrection, as did the prophets? #34: Were not his *miracles* -- including raising the dead -- sufficiently convincing?

(ii) The *manner* of Christ's death (IV, 35-39). #35: Why did Christ have to die a shameful death at the hands of his enemies? #36: Why the criminal's death of crucifixion? #37: Why did Christ not come down from the cross directly after his death, instead allowing himself to be buried? #38: Why, after a public crucifixion, were his post-resurrection appearances private? #39: Again, why did Christ have to die a public death?

(iii) The *human instruments* of Christ's death (IV, 40-42). #40: In what were the Jews, the instruments of Christ's redemptive death, guilty? #41: What of Christ's prayer "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing"? #42: Why were the Jews hostile?

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78. HAYEK, *Apologie* (1977), 19-20.

79. كتاب المسائل والأجوبة. GCAL II, 210-211 (#2). Ed. HAYEK, *Apologie* (1977), 91\*-265\*.

80. References are made according to 'Ammār's divisions (slightly touched up by Hayek), with the Roman numeral referring to the *maqālah* or *fann* and the Arabic numeral to the *mas'alah*.

81. Ibid., 135\*-47\*.

82. Ibid., 228\*-48\*.

(c) Finally, 'Ammār discusses the meaning of claims that Christ "destroyed sin and abolished death," which empirical observation would seem to falsify (IV.47-49).<sup>(83)</sup>

2. "The Book of the Demonstration"<sup>(84)</sup> overlaps with the previous work, but also contains new material. The *loci* important for the present study are:

(a) The true religion (chapters 2-3).<sup>(85)</sup> This is dealt with in much the same way as in "The Book of Questions and Answers." In particular, see 'Ammār's discussion of why the acceptance of Christianity cannot be explained by *al-istihsān*, the reasoned approval of plausible teachings.<sup>(86)</sup>

(b) The rebuttal of the charge that Christians falsified the scriptures (chapter 4).<sup>(87)</sup> The centrality of the crucifixion and of the worship of the Crucified to the Bible, despite their offensiveness, is evidence that the text has not been changed.<sup>(88)</sup>

(c) The crucifixion (chapter 8).<sup>(89)</sup> 'Ammār first argues that Muslims should not have difficulty in accepting the historicity of the crucifixion. He then goes on to explain its purpose and necessity: to provide a certainty-granting demonstration of the reality of the resurrection of the dead.

(d) The cult of the cross (chapter 11).<sup>(90)</sup>

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83. Ibid., 255\*-59\*.

84. كتاب البرهان. GCAL II, 210 (#1). Ed. HAYEK, *Apologie* (1977), 19\*-90\*.

85. According to Hayek's divisions. Ibid., 24\*-41\*.

86. Ibid., 36\*-38\*.

87. Ibid., 41\*-46\*.

88. Ibid., 43\*-44\*.

89. Ibid., 79\*-81\*.

90. Ibid., 87\*-88\*.

### C. Apocalyptic, Polemic, and Controversy in the Age of al-Ma'mūn (813-33)

The three great theologians that we have just considered were all contemporaries of the Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mūn (caliph 813-33). We turn now to another group of texts that claim some connection with the age of this fascinating ruler.

The age of al-Ma'mūn presents different faces to posterity. One face is chaotic. From the death of his father Hārūn al-Rašīd in 809 until his return to Baghdad in 819, al-Ma'mūn was engaged in a civil war, and in some parts of the caliphate civil unrest and dissatisfaction continued throughout his reign. As late as 831 there were tax revolts in Qumm and in Egypt; that in Egypt had to be put down by the caliph in person. It has been suggested that much of the support among the urban proletariat for the "strict constructionist" school of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, over against what became the official Mu'tazilism of the court, was fueled by hopes for a truly Islamic -- and less burdensome! -- system of taxation.<sup>(91)</sup>

Christians suffered from this chaos along with everyone else. And as had been the case during earlier periods of turmoil,<sup>(92)</sup> one response to the precariousness of life was the production of works of *apocalyptic*, through which "[t]he closed end of a known future allows the author to live with the otherwise chaos of an open-ended present."<sup>(93)</sup> The chaos of the years after the death of Hārūn al-Rašīd led to the production of at least two works of Arabic Christian apocalyptic: new recensions of "The Wisdom of Sibyl" and of "The Apocalypse/Legend of Baḥīrā."

Another face of al-Ma'mūn's reign is entirely different: rational, intellectually open, enlightened. With his patronage of scholars and translators, and his foundation of the *Bayt al-Ḥikmah* in 832, al-Ma'mūn became "the promoter of the cultural watershed of the 3rd/9th century."<sup>(94)</sup> He actively encouraged and even participated in religious debates -- with Christians (and Jews, and Zoroastrians) as well as with Muslims.

The reputation of the caliph for religious openness was exploited by Christian apologists long after his death. In fact, one may speak of a Christian "al-Ma'mūn tradition," one trajectory of which has him converting to Christianity, as in "The Life of St. Theodore of Edessa"<sup>(95)</sup> or in the "karšūnī" recension of "The Wisdom of Sibyl."<sup>(96)</sup>

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91. REKAYA, "al-Ma'mūn" (1991), 336-37.

92. For some Christian works of apocalyptic from the first Islamic century see below, pp. 79-81 and 111-12. See also B. LEWIS, "Vision" (1949-50), 308, where we are reminded that not only Christians, but also Muslims, Jews, and Zoroastrians produced apocalyptic literature during the early Islamic centuries.

93. WHEELER, "Capture" (1991), 82.

94. REKAYA, "Ma'mūn" (1991), 336.

95. GCAL II, 24-25; NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988), 160-62. See also VASILIEV, "St. Theodore" (1942-43), 192-98.

Whatever their degree of historicity, a number of documents purporting to be transcripts of debates or copies of correspondence from the age of the enlightened caliph came to be widely circulated among Christians. Several of these will be examined below.

## 1. "The Wisdom of Sibyl (Sabīlā)"

### Selected Literature:

*GCAL* I, 292–95.

#### Manuscripts

See *GCAL* I, 294 + Ebied's and Young's discovery of copies in Leeds ar. 184 and Oxford, Bodl. Hunt. 328, and add: Sinai ar. 461 (9th–10th c.), f. 34<sup>r–v</sup>; Sinai ar. NF pap. 34 (1002 A.D.); and Sinai ar. 448 (13th c.), ff. 300v–304r.

#### Editions, translations

"Karschunische Version": SCHLEIFER, *Sibylle* (1908) [ed. and GT from Oxford, Bodl. syr. 140 (Hunt. 199) and Paris syr. 63].

"Arab. I": SCHLEIFER, *Sibylle* (1908) [ed. and GT from Paris ar. 178].

"Arab. II": SCHLEIFER, *Sibylle* (1908), 7–49 [ed. from Paris ar. 281]. BASSET, *Sibylle* (1900), 54–62 [FT made from the same MS].

"Arab. III": SCHLEIFER, *Sibylle* (1908), 7–49 [ed. from Paris ar. 70 (base), with Paris ar. 71 and Vatican syr. 58]. BASSET, *Sibylle* (1900), 41–53 [FT made from Paris ar. 70].

"Arab. IV": ed. and ET: EBIED/YOUNG, "Version" (1977) [from Leeds ar. 184].

"Arab. V": excerpts and ET: EBIED/YOUNG, "Prophecy" (1976) [from Oxford, Bodl. Hunt. 328].

#### Additional studies

ABEL, "Rome" (1958), 8, note 1. ALEXANDER, *Oracle* (1967).

A Christian apocalyptic legend which has come down to us in a variety of Greek, Latin, Arabic, and Ethiopic recensions relates how an elderly prophetess or sibyl interpreted a mysterious dream about nine suns dreamt simultaneously by one hundred wise men of Rome.<sup>(97)</sup> According to the sibyl, the nine suns represent the nine ages of humanity, progressing from the darkness of paganism to the appearance of Christ, the reign of Constantine, other historical events of importance to the author of each recension, and finally the eschatological woes and the drama of the End.

In its Arabic dress, "The Wisdom of Sibyl" exists in several distinct recensions. Schleifer distinguished a "karschunische Version" and three other Arabic recensions which he labelled Arab. I, Arab. II, and Arab. III. More recently, Ebied and Young

96. SCHLEIFER, *Sibylle* (1908), 32 (#14) [GT 63].

97. For the earliest (Greek) history of the tradition, see ALEXANDER, *Oracle* (1967).

have added an Arab. IV and an Arab. VI! This list is readily extended. The literary problems posed by this profusion of material have not yet been sorted out – a task beyond the scope of the present study.<sup>(98)</sup> Here it is enough to point out that at least one Arabic recension of the work is a product of the eighth or ninth century, and has some relevance to the present inquiry.

Earlier in this century scholars tended to assign a rather late date to the Arabic sibylline texts. Basset believed they went back to a 13th c. Syriac original.<sup>(99)</sup> Graf vaguely opined that they were "erst in junger Zeit entstanden."<sup>(100)</sup> Shortly afterwards Abel dated the Arabic texts on the basis of what he took to be a reference to the Crusader capture of Constantinople in 1204.<sup>(101)</sup> However, more recent manuscript evidence pushes the date of one of the recensions, "Arab. III," into the first millenium. A fragment of this text is found in a single leaf (f. 34) of Sinai ar. 461, a manuscript which on paleographical grounds is to be dated to the ninth or tenth century. Furthermore, a recension that appears to be a development of "Arab. III" is found in Sinai ar. NF pap. 34, dated 1002 A.D.

Attention to the content of "Arab. III" permits us to be yet more precise in its dating. In it, the turn from history to eschatology characteristic of apocalyptic texts takes place just after the author has made a clear allusion to a Muslim king who did not complete his twenty-fourth year as ruler (i.e., Hārūn al-Rašīd, caliph 786-809) and who left two sons upon his death, one of whom was named Muḥammad (= Muḥammad al-Amīn, caliph 809-13).<sup>(102)</sup> These allusions, which were correctly interpreted already by Basset,<sup>(103)</sup> are followed by a very typical description of the troubled times experienced by the community (including moral breakdown within the Church itself) and an apocalyptically-colored account of future woes, leading up to the recital of the end-time events. It is natural to see "Arab. III" as a reworking of older apocalyptic tradition designed to give Christians hope in the midst of the chaos associated with the war of succession to Hārūn al-Rašīd and the disturbances at the beginning of the reign of al-Ma'mūn. We may therefore date "Arab. III" to shortly after 809 A.D.<sup>(104)</sup>

For the purposes of the present study, the following points are worthy of note:

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- 98. But look for my "The Earliest Arabic Recensions of 'The Wisdom of Sibyl,'" to be published.
  - 99. BASSET, *Sibylle* (1900), 18.
  - 100. GCAL I, 293.
  - 101. Abel's study was read to the Société Belge pour le Progrès des Études Philologiques et Historiques, séance du 12 nov. 1950, but I have only been able to find his conclusion: ABEL, "Rome" (1958), 8, note 1.
  - 102. SCHLEIFER, *Sibylle* (1908), 33 (#16b-h), cf. EBIED/YOUNG, "Version" (1977), 296-97.
  - 103. BASSET, *Sibylle* (1900), 15-16.
  - 104. The significance of this dating for the other recensions needs to be considered. It is not impossible that Schleifer's "Arab. I," which he believed to stand at the beginning of the series "Arab. I" – "Arab. II" – "Arab. III," was composed in the eighth century, and

1. In all the Arabic recensions, Sibyl prophesied the coming of Christ, including his crucifixion and burial.<sup>(105)</sup> This prophecy was known and not infrequently alluded to in later Arabic Christian apologies under the rubric of "the prophecies of the the pagan/Greek sages."<sup>(106)</sup>

2. Throughout the work, Christ is referred to as "he who was hung upon the cross" (*allāḍī 'ulliqa 'alā l-ṣalīb / l-ḥašaba / l-'ūd*). While this appears to be a feature of the pre-Islamic Greek recension of the text,<sup>(107)</sup> in the Islamic context it takes on a special, assertive significance.

## 2. "The Apocalypse/Legend of Baḥīrā"

### Selected Literature:

*GCAL* II, 145–49. *ISCH*, "Bibliographie" 12.1 (and 27.1). LANDRON, "Apologétique" (1978), 120–32. NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988), 136–37.

#### Manuscripts

See *GCAL* II, 149 + NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988), 137.

#### Edition, translation

GOTTHEIL, "Legend" (1898–99, 1899–1900) [introduction, Syriac texts and ET]; (1899–1900, 1900–1) [Arabic text from Paris ar. 215, with variants from Paris ar. 70, Paris ar. 71 and Gotha ar. 2875]; (1903) [ET of Arabic text].

#### Additional studies

ABEL, "Apocalypse" (1935). BIGNAMI-ODIER/LEVI DELLA VIDA, "Version" (1950). ABEL, "Changements" (1954). Idem, "Baḥīrā" (1960). GRIFFITH, "Prophet" (1982), 108–9, 136–38.

"The Apocalypse/Legend of Baḥīrā" in the form in which we have it in Arabic is a strange work: two related but significantly different apocalyptic vision-reports bracket a contemptuous Christian story about the origins of Islam, which (the story

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is one of the very oldest Arabic Christian texts in our possession. See SCHLEIFER, *Sibylle* (1908), 74–79).

105. See *ibid.*, 24–25 (#7d–e).

106. النبوات . . . الحكماء اليونانيين in Sinai ar. 553, f. 8<sup>r</sup> (the citation from the Sibyl is at ff. 23<sup>v</sup>–24<sup>r</sup>), and نبوات الحكماء الحنفاء in the *Kitāb al-maḡdal*, Vatican ar. 108, f. 118<sup>r</sup> or Paris ar. 190, p. 287 (the citation from the Sibyl follows immediately). Curiously, however, the citations here do not correspond to any of the recensions in our possession.

107. See the Greek text edited in ALEXANDER, *Oracle* (1967), where Christ is referred to as ὁ ἐπὶ ξύλου μέλλων σταυρωθῆναι (p. 13, line 66) and the like.

goes) are to be found in the relationship between a well-meaning but foolish Nestorian monk and an ignorant Arab named Muḥammad! The work as we have it is clearly a composite with a complex literary history which has not yet been satisfactorily sorted out. The relationship between the Arabic and the Syriac recensions, for example, is not entirely clear. It appears that we do have a witness to the earliest stages of the Baḥīrā tradition in a Latin text in our possession, which is probably a translation from Arabic.<sup>(108)</sup>

There is a certain amount of disagreement about the dating of this text. According to its editor Gottheil and others<sup>(109)</sup> the form in which we now have the work must date from the 11th or 12th century, even if parts may be much older. Abel, on the other hand, sees the whole as a composition dating from the reign of al-Ma'mūn (813-33),<sup>(110)</sup> and more specifically from the period between 817 and 824.<sup>(111)</sup> Not only do various details of the second apocalyptic vision-report seem to refer directly to al-Ma'mūn and notable persons and events of his reign, but the closest literary parallel to the polemical presentation of Islam's origins is found in "The Letter of al-Kindī" -- probably another production of the time of al-Ma'mūn. I do not believe that Abel's analysis has been seriously challenged, and with other contemporary students of the text<sup>(112)</sup> am ready to believe that the Arabic text as we have it -- allowance made for corruptions and glosses -- dates from the early ninth century.

There is also some disagreement as to under which Christian community this material should be catalogued. The text has most frequently been catalogued among Nestorian authors,<sup>(113)</sup> but Nasrallah recently decided to include the Christian Baḥīrā-legend/apocalypse in his catalogue of *Melkite* literature.<sup>(114)</sup>

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108. Ed.: BIGNAMI-ODIER/LEVI DELLA VIDA, "Version" (1950).

109. GOTTHEIL, "Legend" (1898-99), 192; BIGNAMI-ODIER and LEVI DELLA VIDA, "Version" (1950), 132 note 3; BROCK, "Sources" (1976), 36.

110. ABEL, "Apocalypse" (1935).

111. That is, between the adoption of the 'Alid green in 817 and the execution of Ibn 'Ā'īshā in 824; ABEL, "Changements" (1954) 29, n. 1.

112. LANDRON, "Apologétique" (1978), 121-24; GRIFFITH, "Prophet" (1983), 108-9.

113. E.g. by GRAF, *GCAL* II, 145-49; LANDRON, "Apologétique" (1978).

114. NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988), 136-37. However, the fact that in the vision-report the final (good) king before the coming of the False Messiah is the king of the Byzantines does not necessarily indicate a Melkite author, as Nasrallah claims. Here the author is simply following the (perhaps Nestorian -- so REININK, "Ismael" (1982), 344) "Apocalypse of (pseudo-) Methodius," as also does the Coptic author of pseudo-Pisentius (PÉRIER, "Pisuntios" (1914), 313 [FT 321]).

The material of interest for the present work lies in the legend's account of Baḥīrā's own beliefs concerning the cross, and in his understanding of the Qur'ānic passages and Islamic practices that he taught to Muḥammad:

1. Both the Syriac and Arabic recensions of the story report that Baḥīrā (or Sargis in the Syriac) believed that as the cross of Christ was one, so there should not be more than one single cross in a church.<sup>(115)</sup> The Syriac adds to this that Sargis only accepted wooden crosses, and was sent into exile by bishops who considered him a "hater of the cross."<sup>(116)</sup>

2. In the Arabic story, although not in the Syriac, the monk explains the Christian meanings "that he intended to communicate, as it were subliminally"<sup>(117)</sup> through the Qur'ānic passages he taught Muḥammad. Thus a specifically Christian meaning is given to *Āl 'Imrān* (3):55,<sup>(118)</sup> "Into thy hands I commend my spirit" (which is taken to be Qur'ānic),<sup>(119)</sup> *al-Nisā'* (4):157<sup>(120)</sup> and *al-Mā'idah* (5):64.<sup>(121)</sup> In addition, the gathering for congregational prayers at *noon* on *Friday* is given a Christian explanation.<sup>(122)</sup>

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115. GOTTHEIL, "Legend" (1898–99), 202, 240 [ET (1899–1900), 204, 249–50]; (1899–1900), 260 [ET (1903), 130].

116. Ibid., (1898–99), 202 [ET (1899–1900), 204].

117. GRIFFITH, "Prophet" (1983), 138.

118. GOTTHEIL, "Legend" (1900–1), 59 [ET (1903), 138].

119. Ibid., (1900–1), 60 [ET (1903), 138].

120. Ibid., (1900–1), 60–61 [ET (1903), 138].

121. Ibid., (1900–1), 62–63 [ET (1903), 140].

122. Ibid., (1900–1), 75 [ET (1903), 148].

### 3. "The Letter of al-Kindī" (*Risālat al-Kindī*)

#### Selected Literature:

GAL S.I, 344–45. GCAL II, 135–45. ISCH, "Bibliographie" 11.6 + 12.10. LANDRON, "Apologétique" (1978) 133–52; HADDAD, *Trinité* (1985) 40–43.

#### Manuscripts

See GCAL II, 144–45 (description and stemma in FARINA/CIARAMELLA, "Edizione" (1982), 199–206) + TARTAR, *Dialogue* (1985), 15–17. Samir Khalil SAMIR has prepared, but not yet published, a more thorough inventory.

#### Editions, translations

TIEN, *Risālah* (1885) [ed. from two MSS of Constantinople]. MUIR, *Apology* (1887) [summary ET of Tien's ed.]. TARTAR, "Dialogue" (1977) [ed. from Paris ar. 5141, Paris syr. 204, Paris syr. 205, and Yale, Landberg 56a]. Idem, *Dialogue* (1985) [introduction and FT]. A new edition has been prepared, but not yet published, by Samir Khalil SAMIR.

#### Additional studies

MASSIGNON, "Al-Kindī" (1927). KRAUS, "Ketzergeschichte" (1933). SENDINO, "Apologia" (1949). ABEL, "al Kindī" (1964). ANAWATI, "Polémique" (1969), 380–92. TARTAR, "Authenticité" (1982). GRIFFITH, "Prophet" (1980), 105–8. CHARFI, *Radd* (1986), 123–28 [on the "Letter of al-Hāšimī"].

The older debate about the ecclesiastical provenance and date of this work has been replaced by a consensus that the author was a Nestorian Christian who was, as he claims, a contemporary of the caliph al-Ma'mūn.<sup>(123)</sup> Furthermore, there is broad agreement that the "Letter of al-Hāšimī" which introduces the "correspondence" is not the work of a Muslim at all, but rather a composition of the Christian writer that sets the stage for the polemic to follow.<sup>(124)</sup>

A few passages in this work touch on the cross/crucifixion of Christ:<sup>(125)</sup>

1. "al-Hāšimī" calls his Christian friend to renounce the worship of the cross, which "works harm rather than benefit."<sup>(126)</sup> (29 [108])

123. For a quick review of the literature and views representative of the current consensus, see GRIFFITH, "Prophet" (1983) 105–8. TARTAR ("Authenticité" (1982), 210–14) believes he can narrow the date of the work to 819–25.

124. E.g., ABEL, "al Kindī" (1964), 502; GRIFFITH, "Prophet" (1983), 108; CHARFI, *Radd* (1986), 125–28. TARTAR ("Authenticité" (1982), 217–220) continues to insist that the "Letter of al-Hāšimī" is an authentic composition by a Muslim.

125. Page numbers refer to TARTAR, "Dialogue" (1977). They are followed, in square brackets, by the page number of the FT of TARTAR, *Dialogue* (1985).

126. التي تضر ولا تنفع. A لا has probably been lost in Tartar's edition, since the usual charge, echoing *al-Šu'arā'* (26):73, is that the cross "works neither harm nor benefit."

2. "al-Kindī" responds to this with a justification of the veneration of the cross. His response includes, in addition to traditional arguments, a reminder to "al-Hāšimī" of his own experience of physical deliverance through seeking refuge in the cross. (165-67 [239-41])

3. Later, the crucifixion is mentioned in the context of a presentation of Christ's humility and non-violence (which the Christian polemicist intends should be seen in contrast to the *hubris* and violence of the Muslims). *al-'Imrān* (3):55-58 is cited as a Qur'ānic witness to the death and ascension of Christ. (204-6 [277-78])

#### 4. The Dialogue of Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī

##### Selected Literature:

GCAL II, 28–30. ISCH, "Bibliographie" 12.11. HADDAD, *Trinité* (1985) 32–33. NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988), 134–36.

##### Manuscripts

Complete listing and description in MARCUZZO, *Dialogue*, 169–96. For the study of the *beta* recension I have used, in addition to the translation of VOLLERS: Vatican ar. 136, Vatican syr. 608, Paris ar. 215, Paris ar. 258.

##### Edition, translations

VOLLERS, "Religionsgespräch" (1908) [GT after a 10th c. Egyptian manuscript in Vollers' possession, now lost]. MARCUZZO, *Dialogue* (1986) [critical edition, FT, and study of the oldest recension of the text, from Sinai ar. 556 (base), Vatican Barberini or. 120, Vatican Sbath 542, Vatican ar. 99, Paris ar. 214, Paris ar. 258].

##### Additional studies

PEETERS, "S. Michel" (1930). ABEL, "St. Théodore" (1949). VAJDA, "Traité" (1967–68). VAN ESS, "Disputationspraxis" (1976).

There has been considerable disagreement about the historicity of the events narrated by this text,<sup>(127)</sup> according to which the monk Abraham of Tiberias, while on pilgrimage to Jerusalem sometime in the early ninth century, debated Muslim scholars in the presence of the governor 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Hāšimī, and was in the end vindicated through ordeal by poison and fire. However, the recent publication of a critical edition allows for a reassessment of scholarly opinion concerning the work. The following points may be made:

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127. The strongest judgments *against* historicity are those of VOLLERS, "Religionsgespräch" (1908), 32–33; GRAF, *GCAL* II, 28; and VAN ESS, "Disputationspraxis" (1976), 29.

(a) The evidence must now be read in the light of Marcuzzo's discovery that the debate exists in two main recensions: that which he called *alpha*, of which he provided a critical edition, and the longer *beta* recension, of which Voller's text, based on a tenth-century manuscript, is an example.<sup>(128)</sup> For example, in reading Abel's arguments for a tenth-century dating<sup>(129)</sup> one must recognize that he was working on the basis of passages from the *beta* recension.

(b) Even in its *alpha* recension, the text contains historically dubious and even fabulous elements. The narrative outline – the appearance of a Christian monk or bishop before an exalted Muslim official, theological debate, performance of miracles including emerging unharmed from ordeal by poison and fire – invites comparison with a number of other works of hagiography and popular apologetics such as the passion of St. Michael of Mar Saba in the days of the Umayyad caliph 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān,<sup>(130)</sup> or the confrontation between St. John of Edessa and the Jew Finhās at the court of Hārūn al-Rašīd.<sup>(131)</sup>

(c) This does not mean, however, that there was never a debate in Jerusalem in the early ninth century, perhaps involving a monk named Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī, which may have inspired this text. Little *more* than this, however, may be safely affirmed. Even Marcuzzo, who desires to claim the largest "historical kernel" possible for the work, states his conclusion with the greatest caution: "a Muslim-Christian dialogue must really and fundamentally have taken place in Jerusalem at the beginning of the ninth century between a monk, *let us call him* Abraham of Tiberias, and an exalted Muslim personage, *who might have been* 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Abd al-Malik al-Hāšimī."<sup>(132)</sup>

(d) Whatever one's judgment about the extent of the "historical kernel" of the work, there is little reason for disbelieving the statement of the text itself (in its *alpha* recension) that it dates from the quarter-century between 813 and about 838<sup>(133)</sup> -- which corresponds closely to the reign of al-Ma'mūn. This dating allows time for the development of the *beta* recension, to which the tenth-century Codex Vollers was a witness.

Passages of relevance for the present study include:<sup>(134)</sup>

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128. See MARCUZZO, *Dialogue* (1986), 197–208.

129. ABEL, "St. Théodore" (1949), 233–35.

130. ISCH, "Bibliographie," 163; NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988), 159–60; study and LT of the Georgian text in PEETERS, "S. Michel" (1930).

131. GCAL II, 25–26; HADDAD, *Trinité* (1985), 29–30; NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988), 162–63. To their witnesses add Sinai ar. 411 (1286 A.D.), ff. 191<sup>r</sup>–198<sup>r</sup> (copied, unfortunately, from an incomplete text). An excerpt from the 10th c. manuscript once present in Louvain was published by PEETERS, "S. Michel" (1930), 87–88.

132. MARCUZZO, *Dialogue* (1986), 101. Translation and emphasis mine.

133. That is, after seven caliphs had been murdered, but before two hundred years had passed since the Islamic conquest of Palestine. See MARCUZZO, *Dialogue* (1986), 328–29 (#125).

134. References are to the *verset* numbers in Marcuzzo's edition and translation.

1. On Christ's reception -- with humiliation and the cross (#252-58). Ibrāhīm stresses that Christ was not delivered into the hands of the Jews through weakness.

At this point there is a lengthy addition in recension *beta* in which this idea is further developed. Ibrāhīm here responds to two Muslim objections: (a) Christ was too honored of God for Him to have allowed him to be crucified. (b) If Christ were crucified according to his will, what then was the fault of the Jews? The bulk of the addition is dependent on the dialogue of the catholicos Timothy with the caliph al-Mahdī.

2. On the *šubbiha lahum* of *al-Nisā'* (4):157 (#276-88). Ibrāhīm responds to the emir's denial that God delivered his Son (according to the Christians) to crucifixion with his own interpretation of the *šubbiha lahum*, and an argument for the trustworthiness of the eyewitness accounts of Christ's *ḥawāriyyūn* ("disciples").

3. On whether the Christians blasphemously attribute suffering to God (#325-57). Ibrāhīm meets the Muslim's charge of blasphemy (#325-31) with analogies: a person's angel is unaffected by his death agonies (#333-49); the sun is unaffected by the butchering of a camel on which it beats down (#350-53).

4. On whether Christians worship the cross, and a vindication of Christian veneration of the cross (#512-34).

There are important variants in recension *beta*, especially at #520, where the cross is said to guarantee victory over *all* one's enemies.

5. On the death and resurrection of Christ as the true ground of hope for the resurrection (#535-45).

6. Ibrāhīm's trial by ordeal at the narrative's conclusion (#546-65). Note the monk's invocation of "Christ whom the Jews crucified in this city" (#552) and his use of the sign of the cross (#552, 558, 565).

## 5. The Dialogue of Abū Qurrah and Muslim Scholars before the Caliph al-Ma'mūn

### Selected Literature:

*GCAL* II, 21-22 (#18(a)-(b)). *ISCH*, "Bibliographie" 128.4. NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988), 124-25 (#6.A).

### Manuscripts

See *GCAL* II, 21–22 + NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988), 124–25. The oldest manuscript, Borg. ar. 135, is from the year 1308, and not 1408 as usually stated.<sup>(135)</sup>

### Edition

Ignace DICK is preparing an edition.<sup>(136)</sup>

### Additional studies

GRAF, *Abū Qurra* (1910), 77–85. GUILLAUME, "Abu Qurra" (1925). GRIFFITH, *Theology* (1978), 20–23. DICK, *Créateur* (1982), 75–76. SAMIR "Littérature" (1990), 481. DICK, "Discussion" (1990–91).

The pendulum of critical opinion has swung from regarding the report of Abū Qurrah's disputation at the court of al-Ma'mūn as a rather inept<sup>(137)</sup> fictional attempt to reassure Christians of the intellectual superiority of Christianity to Islam,<sup>(138)</sup> to cautious affirmation of the probable historicity of the work.<sup>(139)</sup> This affirmation is largely due to the fact that a recension of the debate was well known in the Middle Ages, for example by the author of the Syriac "Chronicle to the Year 1234"<sup>(140)</sup> and by the Coptic ecclesial encyclopaedist Abū l-Barakāt Ibn Kabar (d. 1324).<sup>(141)</sup> Perhaps the appearance of a critical edition will help bring the critical pendulum to rest.

In the best known manuscripts of the work there are three lengthy passages which are of relevance to the theme of the present study. Making reference to Paris ar. 70,<sup>(142)</sup> these passages are:

1. ff. 175<sup>r</sup>-176<sup>v</sup>: Response to the question "Did your God die?" Qur'ānic proof that Jesus died and is now in heaven.
2. ff. 180<sup>v</sup>-184<sup>v</sup>: A number of issues concerning the cross and crucifixion of Christ. (a) On the cult of the cross. (b) On the interpretation of *al-Nisā'* (4):157. (c) The allegory of the *ḥāwī* as an explanation of Christ's

135. The colophon concludes (f. 172<sup>v</sup>): وكان الفراغ منه يوم الأربعاء تمّوز، تريح ألف وست مائة. وتسعة عشر سنة الإسكندر. Tammūz 1619 in the Era of Alexander = July 1308 A.D.

136. See "Newsletter," *BAC* 6 (1990) 8.

137. "wenig glückliche," GRAF, *Abū Qurra* (1910), 82.

138. *Ibid.*, 77–85; *idem*, *GCAL* II, 21–22.

139. GRIFFITH, *Theology* (1978), 22–23; NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988), 124–25; DICK, *Créateur* (1982), 75–76; SAMIR, "Littérature" (1990), 481; DICK, "Discussion" (1990–91), 110–12.

140. CHABOT, *1234* (1917), II, 23 [FT II, 16].

141. SAMIR, *Miṣbāḥ* (1970), 301.

142. The correct order of the text is: ff. 149–91, 194–201, 206, 208–11, 192–93, 212–15. The displacement of pages in this manuscript has created a certain amount of confusion (which might have been avoided through attention to the Coptic folio numbers);

redemptive work. (d) Can the Word and Spirit of God be crucified?

3. ff. 192<sup>r</sup>-193<sup>v</sup>, 212<sup>r</sup>-214<sup>r</sup>: On Christ's freely-willed death, and the guilt of the Jews.

It is important to note, however, that these passages are entirely *absent* from the oldest copy of the debate in our possession, Vatican Borgia ar. 135 (1308 A.D.), ff. 157<sup>v</sup>-172<sup>v</sup>. In this recension of the debate<sup>(143)</sup> there are but fleeting references to the cross and crucifixion of Christ: a Muslim opponent accuses the Christians of claiming that the cross made them victorious,<sup>(144)</sup> and of worshipping a creature who was crucified and died.<sup>(145)</sup>

The so-called Jacobite recension of the work<sup>(146)</sup> reflects yet another stage in the development of this material. In the manuscripts of this recension that I have consulted,<sup>(147)</sup> the first and second sections listed above are present, but the third, on Christ's freely-willed death and the guilt of the Jews, is absent.

On the basis of these observations, it is difficult to maintain that the sections on the cross and crucifixion of Christ listed above were part of the original recension of the debate (however this original recension is to be dated). Several of these passages do, however, have clear eighth- and ninth-century parallels.<sup>(148)</sup> When the literary history of this debate is finally sorted out, it is likely that we shall gain some insight into how small units of apologetic tradition circulated in the Arabic-speaking churches for centuries, ever available for use in fleshing out an apologetic narrative – such as the story of the great Theodore Abū Qurrah reducing the Muslim *mutakallimūn* to silence before the caliph al-Ma'mūn.

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cf. TROUPEAU, *Catalogue* (1972), 50–51.

143. Jerusalem St. Anne 52 (17th c.), pp. 293–325, appears to be another witness to this recension.

144. Vatican borg. ar. 135, f. 169<sup>r</sup>; Jerusalem St. Anne 52, p. 317.

145. Vatican borg. ar. 135, f. 169<sup>v</sup>; Jerusalem St. Anne. 52, p. 319.

146. See *GCAL* II, 22.

147. Mingana syr. 190 (1874), ff. 1<sup>v</sup>–24<sup>r</sup> and Mingana syr. 444 (1890), ff. 137<sup>v</sup>–170<sup>r</sup>.

148. The allegory of the *ḥāwī* and the question of Christ's freely-willed death and the guilt of the Jews will be discussed at some length below, at pp. 177–79 and 197–211 respectively.

## D. An Overlooked Apology: "The Book of Eustathius" (*Kitāb Uṣṭāṭ*)

### Selected Literature:

GCAL II, 256–57. HADDAD, *Trinité* (1985) 40.

#### Manuscripts

See GCAL II, 257. My description below is based on Mingana chr. ar. 52.

In the Arabic writings of Coptic authors active between the tenth and the fourteenth centuries we find a number of references to an apology entitled "The Book of Eustathius" (*Kitāb Uṣṭāṭ*). In the fourth chapter of his *Kitāb al-bayān*, Sāwīrus b. al-Muqaffa' (10th c.) refers to and cites from "the book of our brother the monk Anastasius [*sic*], known as 'The Book of Eustathius.'"<sup>(149)</sup> Some centuries later, Abū Ṣākir al-Nuṣū' b. Buṭrus al-Rāhib (later 13th c.) cited from "The Book of Eustathius the Monk"<sup>(150)</sup> in his *Kitāb al-burhān*. And a few years later still, Abū l-Barakāt b. Kabar (d. 1324) included "Eustathius the Monk" in his list of Jacobite authors of the post-patristic period, mentioning that he had written a "Book of the Explanation" (*Kitāb al-bayān*) as a response "to a letter sent to him by one of the philosophers, in which [the philosopher] expressed his inclination towards and preference for the doctrine of the monotheists, such as the Jews and their like (*al-Yahūd wa-mā aṣbahahum*) who do not speak of plurality [in God], as opposed to the doctrine of the Christians."<sup>(151)</sup>

This work of the monk Eustathius has not been lost, but exists in two more or less complete compies: Aleppo Sbath 1011 (1301 A.D., restored in 1793) and Mingana chr. ar. 52 (1876 A.D.). Its title reads:<sup>(152)</sup>

رسالة الأب القدّيس الروحانيّ المعروف بأسطاث الراهب، إلى من  
كتب إليه مستصوباً رأي الموحّدين وأديانهم مثل اليهود وأشباههم، ويعيّب  
على النصارى ودينهم. فكتب إليه هذه الرسالة يوجب الحجّة ويصحّح دين  
النصرانيّة.

149. كتاب أخينا الراهب أنسطاس المعروف بكتاب أسطاث، Vatican ar. 138, f. 44<sup>v</sup>.

150. كتاب أسطاث الراهب، Vatican ar. 104, f. 224<sup>v</sup>.

151. له «كتاب البيان»، ردّ به على بعض الفلاسفة عن رسالة أرسلها إليه يرجّح فيها رأي الموحّدين، كاليهود وما أشبههم ممن لم يقل بالتكثير، على رأي النصارى، وتفضيلهم عليهم، SAMIR, *Miṣbāḥ* (1970), 321.

152. From Aleppo Sbath 1011 as reproduced in SBATH, *Bibliothèque* (1928–34), II, 130–31. The title page of Mingana chr. ar. 52 is missing, but the *incipit* given by Sbath from his MS 1011 is sufficiently long to supply all the missing text.

## TRANSLATION:

The letter of the holy spiritual father known as Eustathius (*Uṣṭāṭ*) the monk, to the one who wrote him asserting the correctness of the doctrine of the monotheists and their religions, such as the Jews and their like (*al-Yahūd wa-aṣbāhihim*), and finding fault with the Christians and their religion. He wrote him the following letter, offering compelling proof and attesting to the validity of the Christian religion.

This title corresponds precisely to Abū l-Barakāt's description of the work. Furthermore, I have been able to find the source of the citations of the *Kitāb Uṣṭāṭ* in the *Kitāb al-bayān* of Sāwīrus and the *Kitāb al-burhān* of Abū Ṣākir in the late but readily-available manuscript, Mingana chr. ar. 52.<sup>(153)</sup> The "Book of Eustathius" available in Mingana chr. ar. 52 would appear to be one and the same as the work highly regarded by Coptic authors of the centuries of Arabic-language theological creativity in Egypt.

Who was "Eustathius the monk"? The text shows clearly that he was christologically "Monophysite,"<sup>(154)</sup> while his biblical citations, which reveal the influence of the Peshitta, indicate that he was a Syrian rather than a Copt. Further information may be gleaned from *Muslim* sources. Both Ibn al-Nadīm and Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah mention an Uṣṭāṭ who was a translator of philosophical and medical works into Arabic;<sup>(155)</sup> Ibn al-Nadīm mentions that he translated part of the the *Metaphysica* (*Kitāb al-ḥurūf*) for al-Kindī (d. shortly after 870).<sup>(156)</sup> If this notice is correct and refers to the author of our apology, then Eustathius emerges as a Jacobite translator and apologist of the mid-ninth century. These conclusions are made all the more plausible by the many parallels that can be drawn between Eustathius' arguments and those of Abū Rā'īṭah.<sup>(157)</sup>

The "Book of Eustathius" is a lengthy and wide-ranging apology in which the crucifixion of Christ figures frequently. Some of the most important passages, as found in Mingana chr. ar. 52, are the following:

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153. Sāwīrus makes free use of material found in the *Kitāb Uṣṭāṭ*; for example, compare Vatican ar. 138, ff. 42<sup>v</sup>–44<sup>r</sup> with Mingana chr. ar. 52, ff. 146<sup>r</sup>–147<sup>v</sup> (on Christ's divine and human acts). Abū Ṣākir's citation of the *Kitāb Uṣṭāṭ al-Rāhib* in the forty-third chapter of the *Kitāb al-burhān*, Vatican ar. 104 (autograph of 1282 A.D.), ff. 224<sup>v</sup>–224a<sup>r</sup>, precisely matches Mingana chr. ar. 52, ff. 170<sup>v</sup>/9–15, 171<sup>r</sup>/3–6, 199<sup>r</sup>/15–199<sup>v</sup>/15, and 200<sup>r</sup>/1–200<sup>v</sup>/4.
  154. His apology includes a refutation of the Melkites and the Nestorians: Mingana chr. ar. 52, ff. 163<sup>r</sup>–171<sup>v</sup>. This, incidently, proves impossible Sbath's suggestion that the author of the *Kitāb Uṣṭāṭ* be identified with a Melkite patriarch of Alexandria who died in 806; SBATH, "Ulamā" (1965), 278.
  155. IBN al-NADĪM, *Fihrist* (1929–30), 341 [ET DODGE, *Fihrist* (1970), 586]; IBN ABĪ UṢAYBI'AH, *'Uyūn* (1965), 281.
  156. IBN al-NADĪM, *Fihrist* (1929–30), 352 [ET DODGE, *Fihrist* (1970), 606].
  157. For example, see below, pp. 210–11, 251–53.

1. A collection of the Old Testament prophecies of the passion and death of Christ, with explanations as to how they were fulfilled according to the New Testament. (ff. 40<sup>v</sup>-43<sup>r</sup>)
2. A response to the assertion that if the passion had been prophesied, then the Jews had no guilt in bringing it to fulfillment. (ff. 49<sup>v</sup>-51<sup>r</sup>)
3. A lengthy passage on alleged contradictions in the gospels, including the Muslim's claim of a contradiction with respect to the thieves crucified with Christ (f. 74<sup>r</sup>) and Eustathius' response (f. 100<sup>v</sup>-101<sup>r</sup>).
4. A review of salvation history, from the fall of Adam and Satan's ascendancy over humankind to Christ's obedience in temptation, his crucifixion, resurrection and ascension, and the mission of the apostles. (ff. 108<sup>v</sup>-116<sup>v</sup>)
5. A lengthy response to the Muslim's reproof of the Christians for their "worship of a God who was born and nursed, who hungered and thirsted, ate and drank, became tired, fled and feared, was beaten and crucified, cried out for help, died, and was buried" (ff. 145<sup>v</sup>-157<sup>v</sup>). This passage includes:
  - (a) The Muslim's charge, and Eustathius' initial response: Christ, while manifesting all human attributes apart from sin, surpassed human capacities. (ff. 145<sup>v</sup>-147<sup>v</sup>)
  - (b) An explanation of "God . . . was crucified" (ff. 150<sup>v</sup>-152<sup>r</sup>), with answers to particular questions:
    - (i) Why Christians are not ashamed of the crucifixion. (ff. 150<sup>v</sup>-151<sup>r</sup>)
    - (ii) How Christians can glory in the crucifixion when in the Torah [Deuteronomy 21:23] it is written, "Every crucified person is accursed." (ff. 151<sup>r</sup>-152<sup>r</sup>)
  - (c) An explanation of "God . . . died" (ff. 152<sup>r</sup>-157<sup>v</sup>). Eustathius considers the three meanings of "death" (the physical death that is evident to sight, the separation of the soul from the body, and the death of sin), and considers the death of Christ in terms of this analysis in order to emphasize its mysterious and ungraspable character. In the course of the discussion he replies to objections and advances other arguments, including:
    - (i) Objection: Does not "God . . . died" imply change in God? Eustathius' response. (ff. 154<sup>v</sup>-155<sup>r</sup>)
    - (ii) Objection: According to Eustathius' own argument, Christ did not die at all, but *šubbiha lahum*. The monk's response. (f. 155<sup>r-v</sup>)
    - (iii) Use of humanity/divinity distinction, body/soul analogy. (ff. 155<sup>v</sup>-156<sup>r</sup>)
    - (iv) How it may be said that God died and is alive at once. (f. 157<sup>r-v</sup>)

6. A refutation of the Melkites (ff. 163<sup>r</sup>-167<sup>r</sup>) and Nestorians (ff. 167<sup>r</sup>-171<sup>v</sup>), which places Eustathius' language about Christ's death in its intra-communal polemical context.
7. An apology for the veneration of icons (ff. 190<sup>r</sup>-193<sup>v</sup>), which has a number of features in common with other writers' apologies for the veneration of the cross, notably its calling attention to Muslims' veneration of the Black Stone of the Ka'bah (f. 192<sup>r-v</sup>).

## E. Two Theological Compilations of the Later Ninth Century

### 1. "The Compilation of the Aspects of the Faith" (*al-Ġāmī' wuḡūh al-īmān*)

#### Selected Literature:

GCAL II, 16–20 (#15). ISCH, "Bibliographie" 12.8.3. HADDAD, *Trinité* (1985), 59–62. NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988), 138–42.

#### Manuscripts

See SAMIR, "Date," 353–55 + idem, "Littérature," 483. To the resulting list may be added the two leaves preserved as Mingana chr. ar. 170 (9th c.). The present study will generally refer to the oldest and most complete copy of the work, BL or. 4950 (877 A.D.), ff. 1<sup>r</sup>–197<sup>v</sup>.

#### Editions

MA'LŪF, "Aqdam al-maḥṭūṭāt" (1903) [free transcription of Chapters 5–8], reproduced in CHEIKHO, *Vingt traités*, 108–20. SAMIR, "Ṣalb" (1984) [ed. of Chapter 18, Question #5]. Sidney H. GRIFFITH is preparing an ed. and ET of the entire work.

#### Additional studies

SAMIR, "Citations" (1983). Idem, "Date" (1985). GRIFFITH, "Kerygma" (1985). Idem, "Arabic" (1986). Idem, "Summa" (1986). SAMIR, "Somme" (1986). Idem, "Littérature" (1990) 482–83. GRIFFITH, "Kalām" (1990). Idem, "Islam" (1990).

This great theological compendium -- Griffith likes to call it the *Summa Theologiae Arabica*<sup>(158)</sup> -- has resisted attempts of scholars to pin down its authorship and date. The frequently-suggested attribution of the work to Theodore Abū

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158. See, for example, GRIFFITH, "Summa" (1986).

Qurrah<sup>(159)</sup> is probably to be declined; it will be shown below that, with regard to soteriology and the cult of the cross, there are major differences between *al-Ġāmi'* and the standard *corpus* of Theodore's writings. For now, the author is best left an anonymous Melkite, perhaps from Mesopotamia.<sup>(160)</sup>

As for the date of writing, the text itself creates confusion by supplying two dates which appear to be contradictory: 800 years "and more" since the destruction of the Temple<sup>(161)</sup> (i.e. after 870 A.D.), and 825 years since the abolition (*ibṭāl*) of Judaism.<sup>(162)</sup> Samir has argued<sup>(163)</sup> that the former date represents a modification of the original text by the scribe of BL or. 4950, who wrote in 877 A.D., while the latter preserves the actual date of composition. But then, how do we date the "abolition of Judaism"? According to a number of old Arabic Melkite texts, this discontinuity in salvation history was marked by the rending of the temple veil during the crucifixion of Christ.<sup>(164)</sup> A ninth-century Melkite monk would probably have understood this to have taken place on March 23, 6634 of the Alexandrian world era of Annianos, or 42 A.D.<sup>(165)</sup> The probable date of composition of the work, then, is  $42 + 825 = 867$  A.D.<sup>(166)</sup>

The author of *al-Ġāmi'* was motivated to produce his compilation of orthodox Christian teaching by the phenomenon of groups of Christians who attempted to accomodate themselves doctrinally to Islam without taking leave of the Christian community.<sup>(167)</sup> *al-Ġāmi'* is therefore a work alert to the Islamic challenges to Christian faith, and in the course of its 25 chapters it includes many passages relevant to the present study:

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159. See SAMIR, "Somme " (1986).

160. He refers to Jerusalem as part of أرض المغرب, "the land of the West." See below, pp. 185–86 (#9).

161. BL or. 4950, f. 154<sup>r</sup>/17–18.

162. Ibid., f. 156<sup>r</sup>/16–18.

163. "Date" (1985) 380–81.

164. See, for example, the Arabic version of the *Anaphora Pilati* as found in Sinai ar. 508 and 445 (GIBSON, *Apocrypha* (1896), 4\*–5\* [ET 4–5, with note 4]); *al-Burhān* of Peter of Bayt Ra's (CACHIA, *Demonstration* (1960–61), I, 180 (#341), II, 56 (#488); and the sixth chapter of the *Kitāb al-burhān* falsely attributed to Yaḥyā b. 'Adī (PLATTI, "Christ" (1988), 269). This last-cited work is a clumsy Jacobite reworking of an older Melkite text.

165. This is argued in detail in Swanson, "Dating" (1992).

166. NASRALLAH (*Histoire* (1988), 142) correctly associates the "abolition of Judaism" with the rending of the Temple veil, but does not consider questions of chronology.

The two dates given by *al-Ġāmi'* do not now seem to be quite as contradictory as previously thought. Writing in 867, the author may well have given the number 800 as the (round) number of years since the destruction of the Temple. A later reader or scribe then added the gloss *wa-akṭar* to bring the figure up to date.

167. See especially GRIFFITH, "Kalām" (1990).

1. Chapters 7-8:<sup>168</sup> on the redemption worked by Christ. He freed us from slavery and curse of the Law (Ch. 7), gave us knowledge of eternal life, and defeated Satan (Ch. 8).
2. Chapter 9: on the necessity of Christ's full humanity to his redemptive work. The chapter repeats many of the ideas of the preceding chapters.
3. Chapter 10: on the *one* Christ, whose human and divine attributes may be carefully sorted between his humanity and divinity only for apologetic and catechetical purposes.
4. Chapter 13: Old Testament witnesses to the life of Christ, including his passion and death (at BL or. 4950, ff. 61<sup>r</sup>-63<sup>v</sup>).
5. Chapter 14, "On the Viewpoints that Exclude Their Adherents from the Christian Community":
  - (a) #11: on Christ's *freedom* throughout his passion.
  - (b) #12: on the one Christ, and against those who would strictly sort his attributes between his two natures (cf. Chapter 10).
6. Chapter 17: questions about the Gospels (including many posed regularly by Muslim controversialists):
  - (a) #11: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"
  - (b) #19: Christ's battle with Satan.
  - (c) #24: the temptation of Christ.
  - (d) #25: Christ's public death on the cross.
  - (e) #27: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."
  - (f) #28: the "three days and three nights" in the grave.
  - (g) #29: the forty days following the resurrection.
6. Chapter 18: responses to questions asked by Muslims and dualists:
  - (a) #4: on Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection as that which allows one to infer the reality of the general resurrection.
  - (b) #5: on Christ's freely-chosen death, and the guilt of the Jews.
  - (c) #8: on the veneration of the cross.
7. Chapter 23: on prayer, in particular prayer before the cross.

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168. The internal divisions of the work are clearly indicated in the manuscripts.

## 2. Peter of Bayt Ra's: "The Demonstration" (*al-Burhān*)

### Selected Literature:

GCAL II, 35–38. ISCH, "Bibliographie" 12.22.2. HADDAD, *Trinité* (1985), 63–65. NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988), 31–34, 143–45.

#### Manuscripts

See GCAL II, 38 + NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988), 144 + SAMIR, "Littérature" (1990), 484. Also, the work was once present at the end of the manuscript which is now Sinai. ar. 447 (13th c.), according to the index on the back of the front cover.

#### Edition, translation

CACHIA, *Demonstration* (1960–61) [ET WATT, *Demonstration* (1960–61)].

#### Additional studies

GRAF, "Eutychius" (1911). Idem, "Werk" (1912). BREYDY, *Études* (1983), 29–87. SAMIR, "Littérature" (1990), 483–485. SWANSON, "Ibn Taymiyya" (1990).

The lengthy Melkite compilation<sup>(169)</sup> which goes under the name of "The Demonstration" was for many years thought to be a work of Eutychius (Sa'īd b. Batrīq), Melkite patriarch of Alexandria from 933 until his death in 940.<sup>(170)</sup> Recently, however, Michel Breydy has decisively refuted the attribution of the work to Eutychius,<sup>(171)</sup> and on the basis of attributions in the three oldest manuscripts authorship may be confidently attributed to one Peter of Bayt Ra's (Capitolias),<sup>(172)</sup> not the martyr of 715 A.D.,<sup>(173)</sup> but rather a bishop<sup>(174)</sup> who probably lived toward the end of the ninth century A.D.<sup>(175)</sup>

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169. The work opens with a passage taken directly from John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa* I,3 (KOTTER, *Expositio Fidei* (1973), 10–12) and concludes with an Arabic recension of Q. 137 of the pseudo-Athanasian "Questions Addressed to Antiochus the *Dux*" (PG 28, 684–700).
170. This was the widely-accepted thesis of GRAF, "Eutychius" (1911).
171. BREYDY, *Études* (1983), 29–87.
172. This is what we find in Sinai ar. 75 (9th/10th c.), f. 102<sup>v</sup>; Vatican ar. 491 (1234 A.D.), f. 127<sup>r</sup>; Sinai ar. 441 (mid-13th c.), f. 121<sup>r</sup>. Furthermore, the index on the inside front cover of Sinai ar. 447 (13th c. A.D.) indicates that the (now incomplete) manuscript once ended with البرهان الذي لبطرس البيت رأس ("The Demonstration' by Peter of Bayt Ra's").
173. See PEETERS, "S. Pierre" (1939). This martyr was a priest, not a bishop, remarkable more for his determined pursuit of martyrdom than for his theological acumen.
174. The evidence of Sin. ar. 441, f. 121<sup>r</sup> (marginal attribution: أسقف مدينة بيت رأس ("bishop of Bayt Ra's")) and 233<sup>r</sup> (colophon: صاحب بيت رأس ("ṣāḥib of Bayt Ra's," ṣāḥib being a common Arabic title for a bishop)) is decisive here.
175. Sinai ar. 75 can be assigned to the late 9th/early 10th century on the basis of paleography, confirmed by the statement of Bishop Solomon of Mt. Sinai, dated 392 H./1002 A.D., that the manuscript had been in the possession of his grandfather (f. 222<sup>v</sup>). Breydy's attempts to cast

Although the language of *al-Burhān* often reflects the Islamic religious lexicon,<sup>(176)</sup> for the most part Islam remains well in the background. Peter is more concerned to provide a Damascene-like compilation of Christian doctrine in Arabic and to urge the neo-Chalcedonian christology over against Nestorians and Jacobites than he is to answer Islamic objections to Christian belief. As a result, Peter's compilation will be cited in the present study much less frequently than *al-Ġāmi' wuġūh al-īmān*.

*al-Burhān* is divided into four very loosely connected parts, referred to below as Books I-IV.<sup>(177)</sup>

1. Book I begins with a demonstration of God's existence and triunity, but then proceeds to a treatment of christological and soteriological issues:

(a) A lengthy passage relates the biblical history from creation and fall to the Incarnation. (#72-129)

(b) The following discussion of Christ's hypostatic unity, true divinity, and true humanity (#130-94) concludes with a consideration of his passion, resurrection, and ascension (#190-94).

(c) The section that follows (#195-272) shows how redemption through the Incarnation of God in Christ reflects God's perfect power, mercy, justice and wisdom, and includes a number of passages of interest to the present study, especially:

(i) A description of humanity's fall under the dominion of the Devil and its redemption through the Word's Incarnation, death (#226-29), and resurrection. (#220-31)

(ii) A discussion of the justice and cunning of God's dealings with and victory over the Devil. (#232-43)

(d) Finally, there is a discussion of Christ's gifts to humankind (#273-400), including:

(i) The cross, which is the third gift mentioned (after Baptism and the Eucharist). (#288-293)

(ii) The Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem which, as one of "the vestiges and the places of [Christ's] holiness in the world" (#310), bears witness to Christ's passion and resurrection. (#338-343)

2. Book II is a presentation and commentary on Old Testament testimonies (*šahādāt*), predominantly of a typological nature, to the incarnation and career of Christ, including his passion and death (#419-457, 488-489, 498). As

doubt on the 9th/10th century dating of Sinai ar. 75 (BREYDY, *Études* (1983), 91) can be disregarded; he cannot have consulted the film of the manuscript.

176. Examples are given in WATT, *Demonstration* (1960-61), I, iii-iv.

177. References below are to the numbered *paragraphs* of the paired edition of Cachia and translation of Watt.

Graf pointed out, this Book is not a translation but an original Arabic composition.<sup>(178)</sup>

3. Book III is another collection of Old Testament testimonies, but of a different sort: passages taken to refer to Christ are reproduced without commentary in the order in which they appear in the Old Testament. Included are a few Old Testament passages understood as foretelling the passion of Christ (#508, 514, 520, 535, 590).

4. Book IV is an Arabic recension of Question 137 of the pseudo-Athanasian "Questions Addressed to Antiochus the *Dux*" (*PG* 28, 684-700), which contains an important collection of Old Testament passion predictions (#624-629).

## F. Additional Texts of Uncertain Age

The texts listed below resist attempts to date them, but are included either because other students of the literature have suggested eighth- or ninth-century dates for them, or because I myself suspect that such a date may be correct.

### 1. "Questions and Rational and Divine Responses"

(*Masā'il wa-ağwibah 'aqliyyah wa-ilāhiyyah*)

#### Selected Literature:

HADDAD, *Trinité* (1985), 38.

#### Manuscript

Sinai ar. 434 (1138 A.D.), ff. 171<sup>r</sup>–181<sup>v</sup>.

This little work, which Rachid Haddad brought to the attention of the scholarly world, is the response of a monk to questions concerning the Trinity and the Incarnation posed by a Muslim *ṣayḥ* of Jerusalem, who had read a book refuting the Christians (*al-Radd 'alā l-Naṣarā*). Haddad found enough similarities between it and ancient texts such as *Fī taṭlīṭ Allāh al-wāḥid* ("On the Triune God") or the papyrus

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178. See GRAF, "Eutychius" (1911), 232.

fragments published by Graf<sup>(179)</sup> to date it to the same period, i.e. ca. 780. This is, however, a guess, and the text could well date from a considerably later period.

The crucifixion of Christ is mentioned twice. In a passage on the divinely (and *not* humanly) empowered spread of the Christian faith, miracles performed "in the name of the Crucified" are mentioned (f. 178<sup>r-v</sup>). In another passage, among the witnesses to Christ's divinity are "the dead on the day of his crucifixion" (f. 179<sup>r</sup>).

## 2. "The Belief of the Orthodox Christians"<sup>(180)</sup>

### Selected Literature:

HADDAD, *Trinité* (1985), 62–63; NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988), 146 (#7).

#### Manuscript

Sinai ar. 453 (12th c.), ff. 1<sup>r</sup>–13<sup>v</sup>.

Another interesting text preserved in the Sinai archive and rediscovered by Rachid Haddad is this brief profession of the faith of the seven ecumenical councils. Once again, we are unable to date the text with any precision. On the basis of its concern with Manichaeism and its affirmation of *seven* ecumenical councils, including Nicaea II (787 A.D.), Haddad suggests that the text fits well into the second half of the ninth century<sup>(181)</sup> while Nasrallah opts for the early years of the tenth.<sup>(182)</sup>

However, there is a considerable amount of evidence that leading Melkite churchmen in the *Dār al-Islām* were entirely unaware of the seventh ecumenical council for many years after its occurrence.<sup>(183)</sup> Theodore Abū Qurrah is silent about it, e.g. in his treatise on the icons, written after the turn of the ninth century and very likely in its second decade.<sup>(184)</sup> Neither the author of *al-Ġāmi' wuḡūh al-īmān* nor Peter of Bayt Ra's in *al-Burhān* are promoters of icon-piety; rather, their works appear to reflect a Melkite church making do without man-made images.<sup>(185)</sup> And even Sa'īd b. Bīṭrīq, who died in 940 as Eutychius, Melkite patriarch of Alexandria,

179. GRAF, "Texte" (1934).

180. The full title is اعتقاد النصارى المستقيمين الأمانة التي حدها الرسل الأطهار وثبتها الآباء القديسين في السبع مجامع ("The belief of the Christians who rightly believe the faith which the pure Apostles defined and which the holy Fathers established in seven councils").

181. HADDAD, *Trinité* (1985), 62–63.

182. NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988), 146.

183. See especially GRIFFITH, "Eutychius" (1982).

184. See DICK,  *Icônes* (1986), viii–ix or 24–26.

185. See below, pp. 269–70.

knows nothing of a seventh iconophile council in his *Annals*.<sup>(186)</sup> "The Belief of the Orthodox Christians," however, explicitly names and describes this council. The balance of probability, then, is that this text should not be dated before the mid-tenth century, when Byzantine military advances and shifting frontiers resulted in the opening of new avenues of communication between Melkite Christians in the oriental patriarchates and their Byzantine co-religionists.

The passages of interest to us here are, at ff. 7<sup>v</sup>-8<sup>r</sup>, a brief description of Christ's voluntary acceptance of a *real* death (understood in the context of the two-nature christology), through which, with his resurrection, he redeemed humanity; and at f. 9<sup>v</sup> the author's affirmation of prostration to the wood of the [True] Cross, as well as to any image of the cross.

### 3. "On the Sufferings of Our Lord Christ"<sup>(187)</sup>

#### Literature:

HADDAD, *Trinité* (1985), 78.

#### Manuscript

Sinai ar. 553 (1182 A.D.), ff. 30<sup>v</sup>-39<sup>v</sup>.

Again it was Rachid Haddad who drew attention to this manuscript, in particular to its opening section containing answers to questions on the Trinity and Incarnation (ff. 1<sup>r</sup>-4<sup>r</sup>) and a Melkite profession of faith (ff. 4<sup>r</sup>-7<sup>v</sup>), "the date of which is unknown, but which nevertheless leaves the impression of a great antiquity."<sup>(188)</sup> The section discussed by Haddad is followed, after a list of the great prophets (ff. 7<sup>v</sup>-8<sup>r</sup>) and a presentation of the pagan sages' prophecies of Christ (ff. 8<sup>r</sup>-30<sup>v</sup>), by a chapter on the passion of Christ (ff. 30<sup>v</sup>-39<sup>v</sup>), and a collection of Old Testament prophecies of his Incarnation and passion (ff. 39<sup>v</sup>-40<sup>v</sup>).

The chapter "On the Sufferings of Our Lord Christ, and the Statement of the Intellect Concerning Them" is an ill-organized treatise in very corrupt Arabic, which furthermore is incomplete in the form in which we have it.<sup>(189)</sup> It is an apologetic

186. GRIFFITH, "Eutychius" (1982), esp. 173. I assume that the part of the *Annals* discussed here by Griffith is indeed to be attributed to Sa'īd b. Bīṭrīq. Unfortunately, Sa'īd's autograph, Sinai ar. 582 which has been published and translated by BREYDY (*Annalenwerk* (1985)), breaks off before this point in his chronicle is reached.

187. This appears to be an excerpt from some larger work. The section title reads (Sin. ar. 553, f. 30<sup>v</sup>): الباب الثاني من المقالة الثانية والرابع [كذا] في آلام سيّدنا المسيح فقول العقل منها ("The second *bāb* of the second *maqālah* and fourth (?): On the sufferings of our Lord Christ, and the statement of the intellect concerning them").

188. HADDAD, *Trinité* (1985), 78.

work, occasioned by the author's concern about "groups among our brethren who mix with strange communities . . . and who have sought the praise of the world."<sup>(190)</sup> (Later in the text, in the course of an appeal to the reader not to abandon the Christian faith, it becomes clear that the "strange communities" that the author has in mind are the Muslims.<sup>(191)</sup>) In particular, these groups of wavering Christians had come to deny the double predication of divine *and* human attributes and activities to Christ. As the author (surprisingly) puts it: "They affirm the divine aspects of the actions of our Lord Jesus Christ and deny the bodily ones."<sup>(192)</sup> The text is an attempt to show that *both* divine and human activities must and can intelligibly be attributed to Christ.

The motivation for writing is very similar to that of *al-Ġāmi' wuḡūh al-īmān* and suggests a date in the ninth century. This is merely a suggestion, however. The puzzling "On the Sufferings of Our Lord Christ" awaits a more thorough study.

To show that Christ's sufferings do not affect his divine nature, the author uses analogies: the sun which is unaffected by the destruction of a house on which it shines (f. 31<sup>r-v</sup>), or the holy contents of a church which are unaffected by the abuse of its outer walls (f. 38<sup>r</sup>). Christ's human activities, including his crucifixion and death are listed at f. 36<sup>r</sup>. Miracles in the name of "Jesus Christ of Nazareth who underwent the passion in Jerusalem" are mentioned at f. 37<sup>r</sup>. The redemptive work of Christ is described in the same place.

#### 4. "The Letter of Leo" preserved in Latin

##### Selected Literature:

*ISCH*, "Bibliographie" 13.15

##### Manuscripts

None are known. GERO, *Iconoclasm* (1973), 154–62, describes the *editio princeps* of the work, Symphorianus CHAMPERIS (ed.), *De triplici disciplina*, Lyon: 1508, and discusses the claims of Champeris to have translated it into Latin from Chaldaean (*sic!*).

##### Edition

*PG* 107, 315–24

189. At least one leaf is missing between f. 34 and f. 35.

190. *إِنَّا وَجَدْنَا مِنْ إِخْوَانِنَا أَقْوَامَ يَخَالِطُونَ الْأُمَمَ الْغَرِيبَةَ . . . وَطَلَبُوا مَدْحَ الْعَالَمِ*; Sinai ar. 553, ff. 30<sup>v</sup>–31<sup>r</sup>.

191. See below, p. 131.

192. *فَيَقْرُونَ بِالْأَهْوِيَّاتِ [كُذًا] مِنْ أَفْعَالِ سَيِّدِنَا يَسُوعَ الْمَسِيحِ وَيُنْكِرُونَ الْجِسْمَانِيَّاتِ*; Sinai ar. 553, f. 31<sup>r</sup>.

## Additional studies

GERO, *Iconoclasm* (1973), 44–47, 153–71. KHOURY, *Théologiens* (1969), 200–18.

Arabic, Armenian and (to an extent) Greek sources<sup>(193)</sup> have preserved reports of an exchange of letters between the Umayyad caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz (717-20) and the Byzantine emperor Leo III (717-41). This tradition appears to have provided Muslims and Christians with a literary form for the production of anonymous apologetic or polemical works. In addition to the "Letter of 'Umar" considered below,<sup>(194)</sup> three "Letters of Leo" are known: an Armenian letter responding to the "Letter of 'Umar"; an Arabic letter preserved in Sinai ar. NF pap. 14 (ca. 10th c.); and a Latin letter attributed, in the form in which we have it, to the philosopher-emperor Leo VI (886-912). Of these three Christian letters, the first was probably composed in Armenian,<sup>(195)</sup> and the second, although an original Arabic composition, remains unpublished and inaccessible.<sup>(196)</sup> The Latin letter of Leo, however, has every appearance of being a translation (with slight Westernizing modifications) of an Arabic Melkite original.<sup>(197)</sup>

It is not at all clear how the text is to be dated. One very specific suggestion was made in passing by Armand Abel, who asserted that the text (for which he assumed a *Greek* original) was written during the reign of the last iconoclast emperor Theophilus (829-42), a period into which the Letter's references to Constantine and the victory-giving cross *and* its anti-iconophile characteristics might fit.<sup>(198)</sup> These arguments, however, are not very convincing. The use of the Constantine tradition

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193. Listed in GERO, *Iconoclasm* (1973), 44–46. Note that Theophanes, followed by Cedrenus, records that 'Umar sent a letter to Leo but does *not* mention a response. Of course, these iconophile historians did not consider the iconoclast Leo a defender of the faith!).

194. See pp. 104–8. Another "Letter of 'Umar" is found in the Armenian "History" of "pseudo-Ġevond" (see next note), where it sets the stage for the Armenian "Letter of Leo." FT: CHAHNAZARIAN, *Histoire* (1858), 40–42.

195. The letter is found in the "History" of Ġevond, or rather "pseudo-Ġevond," the 11th or 12th century reviser of Ġevond's 8th century local history. FT: CHAHNAZARIAN, *Histoire* (1858), where the letter is found at pp. 42–97. An ET of the letter is JEFFERY, "Text" (1944), 269–332. GERO (*Iconoclasm* (1973), 162–71) argues that Armenian is the original language of composition. Perhaps, however, his arguments should be reconsidered in the light of GAUDEUL, "Letter" (1984), which demonstrates that this letter is a point-by-point response to an *Arabic* controversial writing.

196. There is a reasonably clear photograph of the first two pages of the text in MEÏMARĒS, *Catalogue* (1985), 116, photograph 87, of which I have prepared a transcription.

197. So GERO, *Iconoclasm* (1973), 153–62, who gives as an example of the Arabic "feel" of the work the phrase "cujus nomen est benedictum" (= تبارك اسمه) after a mention of God (p. 159).

198. ABEL, "St. Théodore" (1949), 234–35, esp. note 38.

hardly permits such a specific dating, and any apologist (at least, any Byzantine apologist) writing a "Letter of *Leo*" would have known to omit any iconophile sentiments. According to Gero, the letter "could have been written anytime between the eighth and the fifteenth century."<sup>(199)</sup>

I would lean toward a date in the ninth or tenth century, in keeping with the other letters of "Umar" and "Leo" in our possession. The Latin "Letter of Leo" certainly contains a number of arguments common to Arabic Christian texts of the ninth century, such as its response to the question about God being present, through the Incarnation, in the impurity of a woman's womb,<sup>(200)</sup> or the charge that Muslims learned from a Nestorian heretic.<sup>(201)</sup> The author's use of the Constantine tradition may indicate that he lived at a time when Byzantine military successes made it possible to speak of gaining victory "by virtue of the holy cross,"<sup>(202)</sup> that is, in the late ninth or tenth centuries.

The letter contains several passages of some relevance to the present study:<sup>(203)</sup>

1. A collection of Old Testament witnesses to the Trinity and to Christ's divinity, Incarnation, and earthly career (317B-318B), including Deuteronomy 28:66, Psalm 22:16b, 18, and Isaiah 53:3-4.
2. A presentation of the biblical history of humankind's rebellion, and God's response in the Incarnation. (318D-320AB)
3. A christological section presenting several points of interest: (a) In what is surely a reference to *al-Nisā'* (4):156-57, "Leo" correctly points to an Islamic text that states that the Jews spoke a "mighty calumny" against Mary, but incorrectly reports that, according to that text, the Jews crucified Christ. (320BC) (b) The following section on the adoration of Christ shares many features with the traditional justification for the veneration of icons and the cross. (320CD)
4. "Leo's" justification of the cult of the cross, which includes the stories of Constantine's vision and his victory "by virtue of the holy cross" and of the invention of the True Cross by St. Helena. (322A-D)

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199. GERO, *Iconoclasm* (1973), 161.

200. PG 107, 321A. This question is raised in "The Letter of 'Umar" (SOURCEDEL, "Pamphlet" (1966), 27/6-9), and met in *al-Ġāmi' wuġūh al-īmān* Chapter 18, Question #6 (BL or. 4950, ff. 119<sup>r</sup>-120<sup>v</sup>) and elsewhere.

201. PG 107, 322A. Cf. the "Apocalypse/Legend of Bahīrā."

202. Ibid., 322C.

203. References are made, of course, to the edition in PG 107.

## 5. "The Refutation of the One Who Denies the Crucifixion"<sup>(204)</sup>

### Selected Literature:

GCAL II, 472 (#3).

#### Manuscripts

Vatican ar. 107 (15th c.), ff. 106<sup>r</sup>–107<sup>v</sup>. The same text is found with glosses in a 12th century Nestorian compilation, the "Commentary on the Creed of the 318 Fathers of the Council of Nicea" (GCAL II, 190–91; ISCH, "Bibliographie" 22.14), preserved in Sbath (Aleppo) 1129 (17th c.) and probably in Sbath *Fihris* #2252 (SBATH, *Fihris* (1938–39), III, 175).

#### Edition

In Appendix II to the dissertation, below, pp. 297–306. An edition of part of the "Commentary on the Creed of the 318 Fathers of the Council of Nicea" is the doctoral dissertation of Pierre MASSRI for the PISAI (Rome), and is being prepared for publication.

This anonymous Nestorian<sup>(205)</sup> text cannot be dated with any certainty. It was used by the author of the 11th (?) century Nestorian encyclopaedia, the *Kitāb al-mağdal*,<sup>(206)</sup> who expanded and reworked its refutation of the claim of *tašbīh* in rhymed prose (*sağ*).<sup>(207)</sup> Its oldest attestation in integral form is in the anonymous Nestorian "Commentary on the Creed," dated by its editor to ca. 1160 A.D. In terms of content, I find nothing in the "Refutation" that precludes a ninth century date. The kernel of its refutation of *tašbīh* is already to be found in the discussion of the catholicos Timothy I with the Abbasid caliph al-Mahdī, while its use of *Āl 'Imrān* (3):169 is echoed in tenth-century Ismā'īlī Muslim texts.<sup>(208)</sup>

204. In Vatican ar. 107 the work is entitled الرد على من جحد الصلبوت, while in Sbath 1129 the section is headed جواب من جحد الصلب.

205. Not only are the earliest attestations of this text in Nestorian compilations, but a number of turns of phrase are characteristically Nestorian, for example the reference to Christ as *māsiḥ wa-mamsūḥ*, "anointer and anointed"; see below, p. 299 (#3).

206. GCAL II, 200–2; LANDRON, "Apologétique" (1978), 166–84.

207. The passage is found at the end of *Bāb* 3, *faṣl* 4 ("The Cross"); see, for example, Paris ar. 190, pp. 295–99, or Vat. ar. 107, ff. 106<sup>r</sup>–107<sup>v</sup>. The same passage is copied as an independent apology, *al-Radd 'alā man yadda'i al-tašbīh*, in Vat. ar. 141, ff. 117<sup>r</sup>–119<sup>r</sup> and Vat. ar. 570, ff. 32<sup>v</sup>–41<sup>r</sup>.

Comparison of the unrhymed and rhymed recensions of the text leads to the conclusion that the (unrhymed) recension of Vat. ar. 107 represents the older form of the text, which on the one hand was put into *sağ* by the author of the *Kitāb al-mağdal*, and on the other was glossed by the author of the "Commentary on the Creed." The comparison is necessary because Massri has discovered instances where the author of the "Commentary" has used the *Kitāb al-mağdal* as a source, converting its rhymed into normal prose.

208. See below, p. 144.

Both the abrupt beginning of the text and the lack of a fixed title suggest that it is an excerpt from a larger work. It may very well come from one of the many ninth-century Nestorian apologies which are at present lost, the existence of which we know especially from the cataloguing activities of Paul Sbath.<sup>(209)</sup>

A brief outline of the "Refutation" follows:<sup>(210)</sup>

The author begins by arguing that *Āl 'Imrān* (3):55 implies that Jesus died first, and then afterwards was raised. (#1)

1. Muslim objection: Linguistically, Arabic allows for the expression of verbs in the reverse order of their chronological occurrence.

Response: *al-Mā'idah* (5):117 supports the case that the verb order reflects the temporal order: God caused Jesus to die, and then was the watcher over them (the Christians!). (#2)

2. Muslim objection: According to *al-Nisā'* (4):157, Jesus did not die.

Responses:

(a) The humanity, not the divinity was killed. "It appeared to" the Jews that they had put an end to Jesus, but were mistaken. (#3)

(b) The Jews did not kill Christ in the sense that they did not, as they intended, put an end to his affair; their action was instead the cause of his exaltation and the worldwide spread of his movement. (#4-6) This agrees with an interpretation of *al-Nisā'* (4):157 in the light of *Āl 'Imrān* (3):169: one may deny that Jesus was crucified and died, because he was crucified and died *fī sabīl Allāh*. (#7)

(c) The *šubbiha lahum* of *al-Nisā'* (4):157 is incoherent. Who is the subject of *al-tašbīh* (in the sense of bringing it to pass that someone resembling Christ was crucified): God, Christ, Satan, or the Jewish leaders? (#8) Each possibility is examined and rejected. (#9-15)

(d) Conclusion: The prophets and Jesus himself foretold the crucifixion, the Jews admit to it, and Jesus' partisans were eyewitnesses. (#16)

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209. SBATH, *Fihris* (1938–39). For a convenient compilation of ninth-century Nestorian apologists and their works, see LANDRON, "Apologétique" (1978), Chapter 5.

210. Reference is made to the numbered sections of my edition of the text, below, pp. 297–306.

## II. ISLAMIC TEXTS

### A. The Sources

#### 1. Early Qur'ān interpretation: the *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*

##### Selected Literature:

ISCH, "Bibliographie" 111. CHARFI, *Radd* (1986), 114–21 (#1).

##### Editions of the *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*:

ṬABARĪ, *Tafsīr* (1954–57) [older, but complete, edition].

ṬABARĪ, *Tafsīr* (1955–) [ŠĀKIR edition, excellent but incomplete].

##### Additional studies

CHARFI, "Christianity" (1980). Also see the literature cited at pp. 102–10 below.

The study of the Islamic attitude towards Christian belief in the death of Christ must, naturally, begin with the Qur'ān. One quickly discovers, however, that the relevant material is quite limited; of the 93 Qur'ānic verses dedicated to Jesus, only one directly mentions the claim that he was crucified, while only two directly mention his being raised by God. And yet these very limited Qur'ānic data gave rise to a great deal of explanation of and speculation about the end of Christ's apostolic ministry.

For the purposes of the present study, by far the most important collection of these explanations and speculations is the Qur'ān commentary of Abū Ġa'far Muḥammad b. Ġarīr al-Ṭabarī (829–923). al-Ṭabarī's commentary is a great mine of older material, preserving large parts of collections that may have been fixed in writing a century and more before he made his compilation.<sup>(211)</sup> Therefore his work is of the greatest importance for understanding Muslims' ideas about Jesus' (escape from) crucifixion as they developed in the period preceding that from which we possess Arabic Christian-Muslim controversial texts.

The most important passages in al-Ṭabarī's commentary for this purpose are his commentaries on:<sup>(212)</sup>

- (a) *Āl 'Imrān* (3):54–55 (III, 289–92 / VI, 455–61),
- (b) *al-Nisā'* (4):157–58 (VI, 12–18 / IX, 367–76), and
- (c) *al-Ṣaff* (61):14 (XXVIII, 92 / ———).

211. See below, p. 102, note 25.

212. References are made first to the complete edition of *Ġāmi' al-bayān*, ṬABARĪ, *Tafsīr* (1954–57), and then to the superior but incomplete edition of Šākir, ṬABARĪ, (1955–).

## 2. The Hadith

### Selected Literature:

*ISCH*, "Bibliographie" 11.2. CHARFI, *Radd* (1986), 121–23 (#2).

#### Editions and translations of the standard hadith collections:

- (a) BUḤĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (1862–1908). ET: KHAN, *Bukhari* (1971).
- (b) MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (1929–31). ET: A. ṢIDDĪQĪ, *Muslim* (1973–75).
- (c) TIRMIDĪ, *Sunan* (1965–68).
- (d) ABŪ DA'ŪD, *Sunan* (1952). ET: HASSAN, *Abū Da'ūd* (1984).
- (e) IBN MĀĠĀH, *Sunan* (1952–53).
- (f) IBN ḤANBAL, *Musnad* (1895–96).

#### Additional studies

ZAYYĀT, *Croix* (1935), 16–17. WENSINCK, *Concordance* (1936–88) [indispensable tool, with which the editions listed above are compatible].

The hadith literature is a great source of early Muslim attitudes concerning the cross. The following hadith reports (or groups of related reports) might be mentioned:

#### 1. The hadith reports concerning Christ's return:

A frequently recurring set of hadith reports describe Christ and his actions upon his return to the earth. All versions of the report are agreed that he will "break the cross and kill the swine." See:<sup>(213)</sup>

BUḤĀRĪ II, 40 (*buyū'* 102); 107 (*maẓālim* 31); 370 (*anbiyā'* 49).  
 MUSLIM I, 135 (*īmān* 242).  
 TIRMIDĪ VII, 10–11 (*fitan* 54).  
 ABŪ DA'ŪD II, 430–32 (*malāḥim* 14).  
 IBN MĀĠĀH II, 1363 (*fitan* 33).  
 IBN ḤANBAL II, 240, 272, 290, 394, 406, 411, 437, 482–83, 493–94, 538.

#### 2. "The cross has triumphed"

Another hadith report, generally to be found in an eschatological context, describes how a truce between the Muslims and the Byzantines is broken when a Christian raises a cross and declares, "The cross has triumphed!"

ABŪ DA'ŪD II, 424–25 (*malāḥim* 2).  
 IBN MĀĠĀH II, 1369 (*fitan* 35).  
 IBN ḤANBAL IV, 91; V, 371–72, 409.

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213. For the following lists, editions of the hadith collections are referred to solely by the name of the compiler. References are given to chapter and section number, where available.

### 3. Worshippers of the cross on the Day of Judgment

According to these hadith reports, on the Day of Judgment the peoples will be called to present themselves with that which they worshipped – such as the cross.

BUḤARĪ IV, 463 (*tawḥīd* 24).

TIRMIDĪ VII, 234 (*ṣifat al-ġannah* 20).

IBN ḤANBAL II, 368.

### 4. ‘Adī b. Ḥātim’s golden cross

‘Adī approached the Prophet with a golden cross around his neck, and was told to throw the idol away.

TIRMIDĪ VIII, 248 (*tafsīr sūrah* 9).

ṬABARĪ, *Tafsīr* (1954–57), X, 114 (on *al-Tawbah* (9):31).

### 5. Muḥammad’s mission

According to one hadith report, Muḥammad described himself as sent to destroy musical instruments, idols, and crosses.

IBN ḤANBAL II, 268.

### 6. Muḥammad’s attitude toward cross-patterns in garments, etc.

Another set of hadith reports state that Muḥammad did not allow anything with a cross-pattern in his house.

BUḤARĪ, IV, 104 (*libās* 90).

ABŪ DĀ’ŪD II, 391 (*libās* 44).

IBN ḤANBAL VI, 52, 237, 252.

### 7. The woman with crosses on her garment

In a similar vein, another set of hadith reports tell that ‘Ā’īṣah saw a woman with a cross-pattern in her garment and told her to remove it, as the Prophet would not have countenanced it.

IBN ḤANBAL VI, 140, 216, 225.

### 8. The legal consequences of breaking a cross

A legal issue, brought up but not discussed in al-Buḥarī (but discussed by later Muslim jurists) is whether one who breaks a cross made of intrinsically worthless materials is liable for damages.

BUḤARĪ II, 107 (*maẓālim* 32)

## B. The Earliest Refutations of the Christians

We do not know who was the first Muslim to write a refutation of the Christians, but for the origins of the *radd* ("refutation") genre we should probably look to the earliest Muslim *mutakallimūn* in the later eighth century. The Melkite Christian author of the treatise *Masā'il wa-ağwibah 'aqliyyah wa-ilāhiyyah*, thought to be a work of the late eighth century, specifically states that he is responding to three issues raised in a work entitled *al-Radd 'alā l-Naṣārā* ("The Refutation of the Christians"). Whether or not the eighth-century dating of *Masā'il* is correct, the list of Muslims who wrote treatises with titles such as *al-Radd 'alā l-Naṣārā* before the mid-ninth century reads like a "Who's Who" of the early *kalām*: Ḍirār b. 'Amr, Abū Rabī' Muḥammad b. al-Layṭ, Abū Sahl Biṣr b. al-Mu'tammar, Abū Mūsā 'Īsā b. Ṣabīḥ al-Murdār, Abū l-Huḍayl al-'Allāf, Abū Ġa'far al-Iskāfī, Ḥafṣ al-Fard.<sup>(214)</sup> Unfortunately, all these works are (at present) lost.

It is not until the mid-ninth century that texts representative of the Islamic "refutation of the Christians" genre are available to us. Several of these are listed below. (Another text, the refutation of Abū 'Īsā Muḥammad b. Hārūn al-Warrāq, is left for the next section, reserved for the most dialectically sophisticated of the refutations of the Christians.)

### 1. Abū 'Utmān 'Amr b. Baḥr al-Ġāḥiẓ (776-869)

#### Selected Literature:

GAL I, 152–53; S.I, 239–47. *ISCH*, "Bibliographie" 11.13.  
CHARFI, *Radd* (1986), 137–40 (#7).

#### Manuscripts

See PELLAT, "Inventaire" (1984), esp. 129 (#19), 151–52 (#165), 163 (#239). For a fuller description of the MSS of *al-Radd 'alā l-Naṣārā*, see FINKEL, "Risāla" (1927), 311–13.

#### Editions, translations

*Kitāb al-aḥbār wa-kayfa taṣiḥḥ*: PELLAT, "Croyances" (1967) [ed. and FT of the passage of importance here].

*al-Radd 'alā l-Naṣārā*: FINKEL, *Essays* (1926) [ed. from Cairo, Taymūr *adab* 19 (presently in the Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah)]. FINKEL, "Risāla" (1927) [partial ET of Finkel's ed.]. ALLOUCHE, "Traité" (1939) [complete FT of Finkel's ed.]. PELLAT, *Jāḥiẓ* (1969), 86–91 [ET of selected passages]. 'ABD AL-SALĀM, *al-Ġāḥiẓ* (1979), III, 303–51 [critical edition]. ŠARQĀWĪ, *Muḥtār* (1984) [a convenient reproduction (with some corrections) of Finkel's edition].

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214. See the list in CHARFI, *Radd* (1986), 163–64.

## Additional studies

ANAWATI, "Polémique" (1969), 396–99. PELLAT, "Christologie" (1970).

From time to time in his voluminous writings, the great Mu'tazilite *littérateur* al-Ġāḥiẓ touched on questions concerning Christianity. As a *mutakallim* there was no avoiding comment on Christ, both as the Qur'ān and the Christians presented him. As a social critic concerned to do battle with groups representing a danger to Islam, there was no avoiding comment on the Christian communities around him.<sup>(215)</sup>

Two works well illustrate these two aspects of al-Ġāḥiẓ's engagement with Christianity: "Tradition-Reports and How They Can Be Authenticated" (*Kitāb al-aḥbār wa-kayfa taṣiḥḥ*) and "The Refutation of the Christians" (*al-Radd 'alā l-Naṣārā*), both written before the year 232 H./846-47.<sup>(216)</sup> The former deals with questions of discerning what is and is not historical – clearly a major problem in the Muslims' controversy with the Christians. The latter is a socio-political tract, alerting Muslims to the danger that Christians would pose to their community unless dividing lines were carefully drawn, and Christians kept in their proper place. Each contains a passage of importance to the present study:

1. In one passage from "Tradition-Reports and How They Can Be Authenticated" (*Kitāb al-aḥbār wa kayfa taṣiḥḥ*), al-Ġāḥiẓ examines the great cultural achievements of the four major pre-Islamic civilizations (the Arabs, Indians, Byzantines, and Persians) in order to contrast the greatness of these achievements with the irrationality of their religious beliefs. In this context al-Ġāḥiẓ presents Christian (Byzantine) belief in the Incarnation and death of the Creator and Lord.<sup>(217)</sup>

2. A rather similar passage is found at the very end of that part of "The Refutation of the Christians" (*al-Radd 'alā l-Naṣārā*) which has been preserved. According to it, the human career of Jesus and his crucifixion and death (according to the Christians) make nonsense of the claim that he is

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215. See PELLAT, "Christologie" (1970), 220–21. This article is a good guide to the references to Christ scattered throughout al-Ġāḥiẓ's writings.

216. This is the opinion of PELLAT ("Inventaire" (1984), 129, 151), who thinks that the *Kitāb al-radd 'alā l-Naṣārā wa-l-Yuhūd* cited in the *Kitāb al-ḥayawān* (written in 232 H.) is the same as the work under consideration here, not a separate work. Cf. Brockelmann in *GAL* I, 242 (#13), 244 (#6) and 245 (#24)), who believes that al-Ġāḥiẓ wrote separate refutations of the Christians, of the Jews, and of the Christians *and* the Jews.

217. PELLAT, "Croyances" (1967), 99–100 [FT 86].

God.<sup>(218)</sup>

## 2. al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm (d. 860): "The Book of the Refutation of the Christians" (*Kitāb al-radd 'alā l-Naṣārā*)

### Selected Literature:

GAL I, 185–86; S.I, 314–15. GAS I, 561–63. ISCH, "Bibliographie" 11.11. CHARFI, *Radd* (1986), 135–36 (#5).

#### Manuscripts

See GAS I, 562 (#22).

#### Editions, translation

DI MATTEO, "Confutazione" (1921–22) [ed. and IT]. Rosalind GWYNNE is preparing an ET and study.

#### Additional studies

FRITSCH, *Islam* (1930), 12–13. MADELUNG, *Al-Qāsim* (1965). ANAWATI, *Polémique* (1969), 395–96.

The imam Tarğumān al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥasanī al-ʿAlawī al-Rassī (785–860) was a founder of the Zaydite community of South Arabia. His "Book of the Refutation of the Christians," written in elegant *sağʿ* (rhymed prose), is a sustained attack on the notion that God could have a son. All the same, it is notable for its objectivity in reporting Christian doctrine, both that upon which Melkites, Jacobites and Nestorians agree and that about which they differ.

We take note of the following:<sup>(219)</sup>

1. In Part I (in refutation of the notion that God could have a son, 304–14 [332–45]) we find a passage emphasizing Christ's similarity to all human beings. His eating and drinking, sadness and worry, and – according to the Christians -- passion and death, simply and obviously contradict Christian claims about his divinity. (307 [335])
2. Part II (314–18 [345–49]) is al-Qāsim's exposition of Christian doctrine. After a brief summary of the Christian belief in the Incarnation (including Christ's passion and death, 316/7–9 [346]), he proceeds to an insightful

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218. ʿABD AL-SALĀM, *al-Ğāhiz* (1979), III, 350–51 or ŠARQĀWĪ, *Muhtār* (1984), 125 [FT ALLOUCHE, "Traité" (1939), 153].

219. Page/line references are to Di Matteo's edition, followed, in square brackets, by the corresponding reference to his Italian translation.

description of the differences between the three major Christian communions. Then in a lengthy and important passage (317/8-318/8 [347-48]) he describes that about which the three Christological confessions are agreed, namely, the general outlines of the narrative of redemption : Adam's fall, Satan's ascendancy over humanity, the Incarnation of the divine Son and his suffering and death in order to redeem humanity from Satan's hand.

### 3. 'Alī b. Rabbān al-Ṭabarī (ca. 785/90 - ca. 860)

#### Selected Literature:

*GAL* S.I, 414–15. *GAS* III, 236–40. *ISCH*, "Bibliographie" 11.10. CHARFI, *Radd* (1986), 128–35 (#4).

#### Manuscripts

*al-Radd 'alā l-Naṣārā* is known in a single incomplete manuscript, Istanbul, Şehit Ali 1628. Some citations are preserved in the refutation of al-Şafī b. al-'Assāl, *al-Şahā'iḥ fī radd al-naṣā'iḥ*. For this, see *GCAL* II, 390 (I have consulted Vat. ar. 33 (1305) and 38 (1361)).

*al-Dīn wa l-dawlah fī iṭbāt nubuwwat al-nabī Muḥammad* is likewise known from a single manuscript: Manchester, John Rylands Library ar. 69 (616 H.).

#### Editions, translations:

*al-Radd 'alā l-Naṣārā*: KHALIFÉ/KUTSCH, "Radd" (1959) [ed.]. GAUDEUL, "Radd" (1983) [FT]. New edition of the introduction in SAMIR, "Réponse" (1983), 299–302. Edition of al-Şafī's refutation: MURQUS ĞIRĠIS, *Şahā'iḥ* (1927–28). Samir Khalil Samir has prepared a new edition, the beginning of which is published in SAMIR, "Réponse" (1983), 303–28.

*al-Dīn wa l-dawlah*: MINGANA, *Religion* (1923) [ed.]. Idem, *Defence* (1922) [ET]. 'ĀDIL NUWAYHID, *Dīn* (1979) [convenient copy of Mingana's ed.].

#### Additional studies

PEETERS, "Religion" (1924). SIDDIQI, *Firdaus* (1928). FRITSCH, *Islam* (1930), 6–12. MEYERHOF, "'Alī at-Ṭabarī" (1931). BOUYGES, "Ṭabariy" (1935). Idem, "Informations" (1949–50). ANAWATI, "Polémique" (1969), 392–95. SAMIR, "Réponse" (1983). THOMAS, "Notes" (1986). SAMIR, *Mingana* (1990) 26–28.

The most extensive preserved body of writing by a Muslim controversialist of the ninth century is that of the convert from Nestorian Christianity, 'Alī b. Sahl (b. Rabbān) al-Ṭabarī. A former secretary and physician to Māzyār b. Qārin, emir of Ṭabaristān (defeated by the caliph al-Mu'taṣim in 838), and the author of a medical compendium, the *Firdaws al-ḥikmah* (completed in 850), 'Alī converted to Islam under

the caliph al-Mutawakkil (847-861)<sup>(220)</sup> at the age of 70. Probably quite soon thereafter he wrote "The Refutation of the Christians" (*al-Radd 'alā l-Naṣārā*) as an *apologia* for his conversion.<sup>(221)</sup> Somewhat later al-Mutawakkil commissioned "The Book of Religion and Empire in Confirmation of the Prophethood of the Prophet Muḥammad" (*Kitāb al-dīn wa-dawlah*), an extensive Islamic response to the "true religion" *genre* of Christian apologetic. 'Alī al-Ṭabarī's career as a Muslim apologist must therefore be centered on 855 A.D., plus or minus a few years.<sup>(222)</sup>

The doubts of the great Jesuit orientalisks Peeters and Bouyges about the authenticity of Mingana's edition of "The Book of Religion and Empire"<sup>(223)</sup> have greatly contributed to the work's neglect by scholars. However, in the light of David Thomas's discovery of a citation of *al-Dīn* in a work of the tenth century<sup>(224)</sup> and of Samir's enlightening study of Mingana's career and the controversies he aroused,<sup>(225)</sup> such doubts must now be laid to rest. In fact, the two works of 'Alī al-Ṭabarī that we possess together form a polemical/apologetic whole:<sup>(226)</sup> a refutation of Christian

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220. The sources are not united as to *which* caliph ruled at the time of 'Alī's conversion. In the closing sentences of *al-Dīn wa l-dawlah*, however, 'Alī praises al-Mutawakkil for that to which "he drew me and others from among the *ahl al-dīmmah*" (واجترنني وغيري من أهل الذمة إليه) (ĀDIL NUWAYHID, *Dīn* (1979), 210). Is not 'Alī here giving al-Mutawakkil credit for his conversion?
221. 'Alī gives one of his motivations for writing as preventing Christians and others from saying that he converted merely "in order to buy temporal things at the price of religion, or happiness at the price of deception" (كي أبيع أكذا دنيا بدين أو سروراً بغرور) (SAMIR, "Réponse" (1983), 300 (#9).
222. There is a date given in the text of *al-Dīn*: 867 years since Christ (ĀDIL NUWAYHID, *Dīn* (1979), 183). Unfortunately, it is not at all clear how 'Alī reckoned this date. MINGANA (*Defence* (1922), 138, note 1) converted it to 855, but his calculations are not very convincing. In the Nestorian *Kitāb al-maḡdal*, however, we find a report that Christ was born on December 25, 304 *an. Graec.* (see, for example, Vatican ar. 109, f. 59<sup>r</sup>). Might 'Alī's date correspond to 304 + 867 = 1171 *an. Graec.*, or 859–60 A.D.?
223. Peeters provisionally classed Mingana's edition of *al-Dīn* as a literary forgery, while Bouyges opined that *al-Dīn* was the work of a twentieth-century "Pseudo-Tabari." See SAMIR, *Mingana* (1990), 21.
224. THOMAS, "Notes" (1986).
225. SAMIR, *Mingana* (1990). It appears that some youthful slips in Mingana's scholarly integrity led Peeters, Bouyges, and others automatically to doubt the reliability of his publications in (academically virtuous) maturity.
226. 'Alī himself claims as much, when in *al-Dīn* he exhorts his readers to read this book along with his earlier work, *al-Radd 'alā l-Naṣārā* (ĀDIL NUWAYHID, *Dīn* (1979), 159). Furthermore, there is another reference in *al-Dīn* to *al-Radd*: 'Alī refers to the section in which had demonstrated "that the name 'God' and the name 'Lord' are also predicated of human beings" (أن اسم الله واسم الربّ) (ibid., 154). This corresponds perfectly to a passage in *al-Radd*; see KHALIFÉ/KUTSCH, "Radd" (1959), 146–47.

claims about Christ (*al-Radd*) is followed by a commendation of Islamic claims about Muḥammad (*al-Dīn*).

As is to be expected, 'Alī's refutation of Christianity is the most fruitful source of material concerning the passion and death of Christ, but *al-Dīn* also contains sections of interest to the present work.

1. "The Refutation of the Christians" (*al-Radd 'alā l-Naṣārā*)

Material of interest to the present inquiry is scattered throughout the work. The following sections, for example, are to be sifted for useful material:<sup>(227)</sup>

(a) Part 2, "Seven silencing questions" (121/4-128/15).

These are dilemma questions designed to lead the reader to the conclusion that Christ cannot be God. For example, the "third silencing question" is whether the eternal Creator can become passible, to the point of being subject to death (123/3-11). Throughout the section 'Alī freely uses the biblical narrative of Christ's passion, death and resurrection in order to win debating points (e.g., 124/11-16, 125/6-10, 126/9-11, 127/6-8).

(b) Part 3, "Twelve points of accord" (128/15-136/8).

We find very similar material scattered throughout this section. The "twelfth point of accord" is that *God* does not decay and die (129/1-2, and see also 135/5-6). The point that there can be no identity between God and Christ is illustrated with lists of Christ's human activities, including his passion and death (131/18-132/1, 133/19-134/11). Again, we find proof texts taken from the biblical passion narrative (130/21, 131/15-16). Finally, there is an interesting critique of the Christian narrative of redemption, according to which, in 'Alī's view, Christ fails, God is derided, and Satan is praised (132/8-12, 133/6-19).

(c) Part 4, "Critique of the Creed, and contradictions in the gospels" (136/8-139/21).

One passage continues 'Alī's critique of the Christian narrative of redemption, according to which Satan overcame Christ (139/1, 5-10). The Christian proclamation "God raised Christ from the dead" is cited to prove the *distinction* between God and Christ (136/18-19, 138/18-20; also later at 143/10-11).

(d) Part 7, "Why is Christ called God?" (143/23-148).

Here again, New Testament passages (Christ's appearance on the Emmaus road, Peter's Pentecost sermon) are cited in support of 'Alī's point: Christ is a *man*, not *God* (145/15-146/5).

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227. I follow the outline of the text begun by SAMIR, "Réponse" (1983), 294. Page/line references are to KHALIFÉ/KUTSCH, "Radd" (1959).

In the latter part of *al-Radd*, known only from the response of al-Ṣafī b. al-ʿAssāl, we find the materials listed below.<sup>(228)</sup>

(e) Chapter 10, "On the three confessions" (80-91), includes the following citations: "Christ did not cut a strand of the ropes of Satan . . . but bequeathed to [his followers] the mockery of all people" (87/4, 7-8). "Don't you see that religious people only describe God in terms of victory and strength?" (90/6).

(f) Chapter 11, "On the abolition of sin" (92-97), includes the following citations: "Why is it that [Christ] did not abolish sin and death, as you claim?" (92/1) "How is it that Satan fled the prophets and left them alone, but gained power over their Lord?" (94/15-16).

(g) Chapter 12, "On the fact that Christ, when asked about his kingship, neither confirmed it nor denied it" (97-111) includes: "How does the one whom death killed overcome death?" (103/10-11) "In his letters [Paul] cursed Christ openly" [cf. Galatians 3:13] (106/20).

(h) Chapter 13, "An answer to the alleged contradiction among the four gospels" (112-120), includes responses to ʿAlī's perceived contradictions, including the question of precisely when Christ rose from the dead (114/2-4), the claim that Christ rose "after three days" (114/20), and the actions of the thieves crucified with Christ (115/20-116/6). The chapter concludes with a response to the conventional debate question: Did Christ will his death (in which case the Jews are to be commended) or not (in which case Christ is not worthy of praise)? (119/12-120).

(i) Chapter 14, "On magnifying the cross" (121-122) is the response to ʿAlī's question why Christians make, wear, and use crosses, or make the sign of the cross.

## 2. "The Book of Religion and Empire" (*Kitāb al-dīn wa-l-dawlah*)

A few passages of help to the present study are listed below.<sup>(229)</sup>

(a) Chapter 7, "That the victory of the Prophet is one of the signs of his prophethood" (108-113 [57-60]) is a significant section in the light of ʿAlī's emphasis on Christ's *failure*.

(b) Chapter 8, "That those who called to the religion [of Muḥammad] and those who witnessed to its truth were the best and most righteous of people" (114-129 [61-76]), contains a brief description of the differences between Christian and Islamic descriptions of Christ, also with regard to his

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228. The chapters are those of al-Ṣafī. Page/line references are to MURQUS ĠIRĠIS, *Ṣaḥāʾih* (1927-28).

229. Page references are to the convenient edition of ʿĀDIL NUWAYHID (*Dīn* (1979), followed, in square brackets, by the corresponding pages in the ET of MINGANA, *Defence* (1922).

(alleged) death (128 [75]).

(c) In the section containing "Responses to objections" (189-204 [147-61]) we find one passage in which 'Alī offers proof-texts from the biblical story of the passion of Christ (to show that Christ did not always offer evidentiary miracles, (194 [150-51]), and another on the failure of Christ's pacifism (199-200 [156-57]). Also notable is "the response to the one who claims that no [prophet] mentioned the resurrection except Christ" (203-4 [161]), which may be a distorted reflection of a Christian argument for the necessity of Christ's death.

(d) In the "Final question and exhortation" with which the work concludes (207-10 [165-69]) 'Alī offers a brief description of Christian belief which includes the theme of Christ's unsuccessful struggle with Satan (208 [166]).

#### 4. "The Letter of 'Umar"

##### Selected Literature:

*ISCH*, "Bibliographie" 11.28. CHARFI, *Radd* (1986), 160-62 (#17).

##### Manuscripts

The second half of the original Arabic text of this letter is preserved in a parchment manuscript of the ninth or early tenth century, found in the collection of Damascene documents of the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts in Istanbul. See SOURDEL, "Pamphlet" (1966), 1-3. The first half of the text is preserved in Romance translation in a manuscript of Madrid, B.N.M. Aljamiado No. 4944 (16th c.).

##### Editions, translations

SOURDEL, "Pamphlet" (1966) [ed. of Arabic fragment and FT]. CARDAILLAC, "Polémique" (1972), II, 194-267 [ed. of Romance version, also incomplete]. GAUDEUL, "Letter" (1984) [ET of reconstructed letter].

As was mentioned earlier,<sup>(230)</sup> the tradition of an exchange of letters between the the Umayyad caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz and the Byzantine emperor Leo III provided both Muslims and Christians with a framework for the drafting of polemical/apologetic essays. The "Letter of 'Umar" which we have in our possession is one such essay, written in Arabic sometime in the ninth century. It drew a

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230. Above, pp. 42-44.

response, a "Letter of Leo" which has been preserved in Armenian.<sup>(231)</sup>

We are, naturally enough, entirely ignorant as to the identity of the actual author of the work. As for the date of its writing, the pertinent evidence is the following:

- (i) The Arabic manuscript. Its archaic *kūfī-nashī* script and its *qāf* written with an underdot suggest a ninth- rather than a tenth-century date.<sup>(232)</sup>
- (ii) Content. A striking feature of the "Letter of 'Umar" is the similarity of many of its ideas and themes to those of the work of 'Alī al-Ṭabarī, described above.<sup>(233)</sup> There is, however, a notable difference. Where 'Alī al-Ṭabarī very freely quotes from the Christian gospels -- even from the narrative of Christ's passion and death! -- in order to make specific points, the "Letter of 'Umar" *opens* with a chapter on the falsification of the Christian scriptures. Even when quoting from the Sermon on the Mount, the "Letter of 'Umar" frequently records its suspicion of the Christian scriptures with the *caveat*: *zā'amtum*, "you have claimed."<sup>(234)</sup>
- (iii) *isnād*. The Romance translation preserves an *isnād* which gives the latest transmitter as Muḥammad b. 'Awf b. 'Abd al-'Azīz (d. 885).

Sourdel did not know the Romance translation, but on the basis of the evidence available to her suggested that the work should be dated to the time of al-Mutawakkil (847-861) or a little later.<sup>(235)</sup> Gaudeul, weighing the evidence of the *isnād*, would look for a date of writing shortly after 885.<sup>(236)</sup> This argument, however, assumes that the *isnād* preserved in the Romance translation is necessarily as old as the text of the Letter itself.

It is probably safe to say that the "Letter of 'Umar" was not composed any *earlier* than al-Mutawakkil's reign, when 'Alī al-Ṭabarī was producing his polemical/apologetic pair of books. The author very possibly knew these books, but if so, in his own work he avoided what he would have seen as 'Alī al-Ṭabarī's dangerous habit of citing from narratives the *truth* of which a Muslim would have to dispute. The archaic handwriting of the Arabic parchment manuscript makes it unlikely that the work was written more than a few decades after the time of al-Mutawakkil. With caution, then, a date of around 860 or 870 may be proposed for the "Letter of 'Umar."

Passages of interest for the present study are listed below.<sup>(237)</sup>

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231. See above, p. 43.

232. See the description in SOURDEL, "Pamphlet" (1966), 2-3.

233. This was recognized by Sourdel, who, however, was only familiar with *al-Dīn wa l-dawlah*. See *ibid.*, 10.

234. *Ibid.*, 29-31.

235. *Ibid.*, 11. Fiey too would date the work under al-Mutawakkil; FIEY, *Chrétiens syriaques* (1980), 97.

236. "Letter" (1984), 126.

237. References are made to the numbered *paragraphs* in GAUDEUL, "Letter" (1984), followed, in parentheses, by page/line references to SOURDEL, "Pamphlet" (1966).

1. #17: Christian practices -- including use of cross and image -- are innovations.
2. #44-45 (27/1-2): Jesus' eating, drinking, sleeping, etc. prove that he was not God.
3. #46 (27/3-5): Citation of Deuteronomy 21:22-23 against the claim that Jesus was crucified.
4. #56-60 (28/13-29/5): The Christian narrative of redemption grants too much power to Iblīs/Satan, both over the souls of the faithful Old Testament prophets (#56-58) and in the struggle with Jesus (#59-60).
5. #63-64 (29/12-17): Against the cult of the cross and of the images.
6. #79 (32/8-11): Muḥammad did *not* follow "Yās" and "Naṣṭhūr" in their Christian practices, including the veneration of the cross.
7. #84 (33/3-5): Muḥammad forbade idolatry, including the worship of cross or image.
8. #87-88 (33/11-17): Military success is a criterion of the true religion.

### C. Two Sophisticated Mu'tazilite Refutations

The Mu'tazilites were known as *ahl al-'adl wa-l-tawḥīd* (roughly, "the partisans of [God's] justice and unicity"). As they struggled to commend and defend their construal of the Qur'ān's witness to the unicity of God, it is inevitable that they should have taken notice of specifically Christian teachings. Doctrines such as God's Trinity and Incarnation served not only as a foil for the Mu'tazilites' own doctrine of God, but also as a warning to the rest of the Muslim community: to depart from the strictest construal of God's *tawḥīd* is to risk falling into errors like those of the Christians<sup>(238)</sup>. Therefore the Mu'tazilite *mutakallim* who refuted Christian beliefs not only reinforced the boundaries about the Muslim community as a whole, warding off threats from the outside, but also struck a blow against those groups *within* the Islamic community deemed to be prone to Christian-like errors.

We have already encountered one of the great Mu'tazilites in the person of al-Ġāḥiẓ. We noted, however, that his "Refutation of the Christians" is to a great extent a work of social analysis. In the present section we look to works containing a more fundamental critique of Christian doctrine.

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238. Muslim polemicists regularly accused their opponents of having fallen into Christian doctrine. For example, al-Subkī reports that the Mu'tazilites said of the (Muslim) "asserters of the attributes": "The Christians have disbelieved with three. You have disbelieved with seven!" SUBKĪ, *Ṭabaqāt* (1906-7), II, 51-52.

# 1. Abū 'Īsā Muḥammad b. Hārūn al-Warrāq (d. 861-62):<sup>(239)</sup>

## "The Book of the Refutation of the Three Sects of Christians"

(*Kitāb al-radd 'alā l-firaq al-ṭalāt min al-Naṣārā*)

### Selected Literature:

GAL S.I, 341–42. GAS I, 620. GCAL II, 239–41. ISCH, "Bibliographie" 11.12. CHARFI, *Radd* (1986), 141–46 (#9).

#### Manuscripts

The text is only preserved through citations in the response of Yaḥyā b. 'Adī. See GCAL II, 240–41; PLATTI, *Incarnation* (1987), vii–xiv.

#### Editions, translations

ABEL, "Refutation" (1949) [ed. and FT of the preserved fragments of Part II of *al-Radd*, the refutation of the Incarnation, from Paris ar. 167 (base), Paris ar. 168, Vatican ar. 113, Vatican ar. 114]. PLATTI, *Incarnation* (1987) [new ed. and FT, from the same MSS + Cairo, Patr. Copt. *Theol.* 173]. PLATTI, "Doctrine" (1991) [ed. and FT of the first paragraphs of Part I of the *Radd*, the refutation of the Trinity, from Paris ar. 167 (base) and Vatican ar. 114].

#### Additional studies

PLATTI, "Objections" (1987–88).

Despite the fact that Abū 'Īsā al-Warrāq (and his disciple Ibn al-Rāwandī) are best known today for the charge of *zandaqah* (heresy) -- and in particular of dualism/Manichaeism -- that was laid against them,<sup>(240)</sup> in his "Refutation of the Three Sects of Christians" we find him battling for the Islamic concept of *tawḥīd* against Christian assertions of the Trinity and Incarnation of God. His poor reputation among Muslims seems to have prevented his work from becoming widely diffused and known, at least under his name and in the form in which he wrote it. That we possess excerpts from the work is due to the care taken by the *Christian* philosopher and theologian Yaḥyā b. 'Adī in copying out long sections, to which he devoted careful responses.

239. The date of al-Warrāq's death is variably given as 247 H./861–62 or 297 H./909–10. Platti believes the former date to be correct (PLATTI, *Incarnation* (1987), [translation volume] ix).

240. See PLATTI, *Incarnation* (1987), [translation volume] ix–x.

1. 'Abd Allāh's introductory summary of the faith of Christians<sup>(241)</sup> includes a lengthy passage on the beliefs of the Nestorians, Melkites, and Jacobites with respect to the death of Christ.<sup>(242)</sup>

2. The (alleged) crucifixion, death and burial of Christ play a major role in Part II of *al-Radd*, Abū 'Īsā's vigorous polemic against the alleged union of God and man in Christ. Among the most important paragraphs for present purposes are the following:<sup>(243)</sup>

(a) (#21-23) On the christological definitions of the Nestorians, Melkites, and Jacobites, which do not succeed in preventing birth, crucifixion, death and burial from being predicated of divinity.

(b) (#26-36) On Christ's death and resurrection

(i) (#26-28, to all three confessions) What happens to the Union [of divinity and humanity in Christ] in the state of crucifixion, death, and burial? Is it dissolved, or does it remain?

(ii) (#29-31, to the Nestorians) How is Christ to be described in this state? As God, other than God, or God united with a corpse?

(iii) (#32-35, to all three confessions) Who raised Christ? Himself, or someone else?

(iv) (#36, to Melkites and Jacobites) Is Christ presently alive, in which case, who raised him? Or dead, in which case, does he deserve worship?

(c) (#63-69) Questions to Melkites

(i) (#63-67) What underwent crucifixion, death, and suffering: the body alone, the divinity alone, or both together? In the last case, is the divinity alive or dead? If dead, who killed him?

(ii) (#68) On the confession "God suffered, according to his economy (*tadbīr*). Did God suffer when he so "acquired" this suffering? What is the reality (*ḥaqīqah*) of "was crucified" and "died"? Who was the subject of this *tadbīr*? Christ's death and the guilt of the Jews.

(iii) (#69) If Christ is the divine Word united with "universal humanity" (*al-insān al-kullī*), neither of which can be grasped, how could he be crucified, killed and buried?<sup>(244)</sup>

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241. PLATTI, "Doctrine" (1991).

242. Ibid., 26-27 (#15) [FT 13-14].

243. References are to the *paragraph* numbers of Platti's edition and translation (PLATTI, *Incarnation* (1987)).

244. On this same issue, see also #38.

## 2. al-Nāši' al-Akbar (d. 905-6): "The Middle Book" (*Kitāb al-awsaṭ*)

### Selected Literature:

GAL S.I, 188. GCAL II, 390–93. ISCH, "Bibliographie" 11.16. CHARFI, *Radd* (1986), 140–41 (#8).

#### Manuscript

The text is known from excerpts in the response of al-Ṣafī b. al-ʿAssāl, conserved in a single manuscript: Cairo, Coptic Patriarchate 370 (1752 A.D.).

#### Edition

VAN ESS, *Häresiographie* (1971) [ed. and study].

The *Kitāb al-awsaṭ* of al-Nāši' al-Akbar Abū I-ʿAbbās ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Anbārī is a concise listing of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim sects, with a brief response. In the section on Christianity, he lists no fewer than 22 Christian sects. For his refutation, however, he concentrates on the Trinitarian groups, in particular on the three main confessions.

Of importance to us here is a passage from his refutation of the Christians in which he discusses the death of Christ.<sup>(245)</sup>

1. (#45) The refutation of those who say, "The Creator died and was crucified and buried."
2. (#46) The refutation of those qualify the statement with the addition: "from the standpoint of his humanity."
3. (#47) The refutation of those who speak of two natures and two hypostases, and say, "He died from the standpoint of his humanity, but did not die from the standpoint of his divinity."

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245. References are made to the *paragraphs* in the edition of VAN ESS, *Häresiographie* (1971).

## D. Besting the Byzantines: The Story of Wāṣil

### Selected Literature:

STEINSCHNEIDER, *Literatur* (1877), 44.

#### Manuscript

The single known manuscript of the story is Leiden, or. 951, ff. 22<sup>v</sup>–25<sup>r</sup>.

#### Edition, translation

GRIFFITH, "Bashir" (1990) [ed., ET and study].

Leiden or. 951 (2) tells the story of one Wāṣil, a *ṣayḥ* from Damascus who was among a group of thirty Muslims "thrown up by the sea" – probably the narrator has the failed attack of 717-18 on Constantinople in mind -- and captured by the Byzantines. While in captivity, presumably in Constantinople, he is engaged in religious debate first by the patrician Bašīr, then by a bishop, and finally by the emperor himself and "the head of the Christians," i.e. the patriarch. Having confuted all of the Christians in debate, Wāṣil is returned to his homeland, but not before he convinces the emperor that the Christians are guilty of idolatry because they worship what they make with their own hands. And thus it is a Muslim *mutakallim* who is responsible for the iconoclastic policy of the emperor – now identifiable as Leo III (717-41) – and his successors.<sup>(246)</sup>

The story is a good example of a particular sub-genre of Islamic controversy-anecdote, in which a Muslim prisoner or emissary in Byzantium bests Christians, including the emperor and the patriarch, in debate. In the tenth-century collection of anecdotes of al-Tanūḥī, *al-Farağ ba'd al-šiddah* ("Relief after adversity"), the hero of such a debate is the *tābi'* ("Successor") Qubbāt b. Razīn,<sup>(247)</sup> while in the *'Uyūn al-munāzarāt* ("The choicest polemics") of al-Sākūnī (d. 1317) the hero is the famous *mutakallim* al-Bāqillānī (d. 1013).<sup>(248)</sup> The parallel with anecdotes featuring the *mutakallim* al-Bāqillānī suggests that the narrator of our story names his hero for the "founder" of the Mu'tazilite school of *kalām*, Wāṣil b. 'Aṭā' (699-748), who was alive – if hardly a *ṣayḥ*! – when Leo began his iconoclastic program.<sup>(249)</sup>

246. For a discussion of these points in the light of other ancient accounts of the origins of Byzantine iconoclasm, see GRIFFITH, *Bashir* (1990).

247. See CANARD, "Aventures" (1955–56), esp. pp. 61–62.

248. GHRAB, *'Uyūn* (1976), 246–49.

In a polemical exchange common to the three anecdotes mentioned here, the Muslim asks about the patriarch's family. On being informed that the patriarch is too exalted to be involved with such things as women's impurity and/or paternity, the Muslim observes that it is strange that the Christian God is *not* thus exalted! GRIFFITH, "Bashir" (1990), 322; CANARD, "Aventures" (1955–56), 62; GHRAB, *'Uyūn* (1976), 248.

249. This is not the only case of Wāṣil b. 'Aṭā' figuring as hero in anecdotal literature. See the story about his dealing with a group of Kharijites in IBN QUTAYBAH, *'Uyūn*, I, 196.

How is such a story to be dated? The following points should be noted:

(a) A *terminus ante quem* for the dating of the text is provided by the events of the story themselves, i.e. the early eighth century.

(b) A *terminus ad quem* is perhaps provided by the *isnād* at the head of the account:<sup>(250)</sup> the latest transmitter to be mentioned is Abū l-Ḥusayn ‘Alī b. Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh b. Bišr, a scholar of Baghdad who died in 1024.<sup>(251)</sup> The story of Wāṣil therefore must have achieved its present written form by the mid-eleventh century.

(c) As Griffith has pointed out, the apologetic content of Wāṣil’s debates fits in well with other materials that we possess from the ninth century.<sup>(252)</sup>

(d) We should note, however, that the story of Wāṣil recounts the victory in religious argument of a survivor of a military failure. This suggests that the story may have had the aim of assuring Muslims of the intellectual superiority of their faith to that of the Byzantine Christians *despite* military reversals being suffered at their hands. If this is the case, the mid-tenth century might be the most natural time to look for the redaction and diffusion of the story.<sup>(253)</sup>

Whether we date this text to the ninth or to the tenth century, many of its component traditions were in circulation at an early stage of the Arabic Christian-Muslim controversy, being repeated and refuted in a variety of controversial texts and apologetic compendia. For this reason I include the story in this list of witnesses to the discussions of the eighth and ninth centuries, even if its constitutive traditions may only have been ordered to a particular narrative framework, "The Story of Wāṣil," at a somewhat later date.

The passages of particular interest for the present study are as follows.<sup>(254)</sup>

1. Wāṣil inquires about Christian worship of the cross, and follows this up with the familiar dilemma question: was Jesus crucified according to his own will, or not? (318/7-11)
2. Wāṣil warns that if he is killed, the caliph will set his hand to "the killing of priests and bishops, the destruction of churches, the breaking of crosses, and the prohibition of [sounding] the *nāqūs*." (324/17-22)
3. Wāṣil reproaches the Christians for worshipping the works of their own hands. (324/23-325/3)

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250. See GRIFFITH, "Bashīr" (1990), 314.

251. GAS I, 227 (#314).

252. GRIFFITH, "Bashīr" (1990), 303–9.

253. The assertion of the religious superiority of Islam despite a string of military setbacks is a theme of the poetic apology of ‘Abd al-Malik b. Muḥammad al-Šāṣī written in 966–67. See GRÜNEBAUM, "Polemik" (1937).

254. Page/line references are made to the Arabic text — with facing English translation — in GRIFFITH, "Bashīr" (1990).

## Chapter Two

### THE CROSS AND THE MUSLIMS

#### Introduction: Islam's Antipathy to the Cross

#### 1. The beginning and the end: two hadith reports

I was walking with 'Ā'īṣah and a group of women between al-Ṣafā and al-Marwah, and I saw a woman who was wearing a *ḥamiṣah*<sup>(1)</sup> with crosses on [its ornamental borders]. 'Ā'īṣah said to her: "Take that off your garment! When the Apostle of God saw it on a garment he cut it off."<sup>(2)</sup>

The Hour will not come before the Son of Mary comes down among you as a equitable judge, and he will break the cross and kill the swine and do away with the *ḡizyah*, and wealth will abound until no one will accept it.<sup>(3)</sup>

According to the hadith literature, antipathy to the symbol of the cross brackets Islamic history. At that history's beginning stands the figure of Muḥammad himself, who, according to a family of hadith reports such as the first one cited above, would not countenance crosses even as a decorative pattern on fabric.<sup>(4)</sup> At its end, according to a much-repeated and highly-regarded set of hadith reports, is the return to earth of Jesus (ʿĪsā b. Maryam) to "break the crosses and kill the swine" as he ushers in a golden age before the dawning of the terrible Hour of judgement.<sup>(5)</sup> The hostility to the cross manifest in such hadith reports clearly reflects the sensibilities of influential Muslims of the first two Islamic centuries, who were able to project their discomfort with and disapproval of the symbol (and the community) of

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1. The *ḥamiṣah* was a black square wool garment with two ornamental borders.
  2. IBN ḤANBAL, *Musnad* (1895–96), VI, 225.
  3. BUḤARĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (1862–1908), II, 107 (*maẓālim* 31).
  4. Other reports in which 'Ā'īṣah relates Muḥammad's aversion to crosses are found at IBN ḤANBAL, *Musnad* (1895–96), VI, 140 and 216. Another set of reports state that Muḥammad would not allow anything with a cross-pattern in his house: BUḤARĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (1862–1908), IV, 104 (*libās* 90); ABŪ DĀ'UD, *Sunan* (1952), II, 391 (*libās* 44); IBN ḤANBAL, *Musnad* (1895–96), VI, 52, 237, 252. An issue for the early legal scholars was whether wearing a garment with a cross-pattern on it would invalidate prayer: BUḤARĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (1862–1908), I, 106–7 (*al-ṣalāt* 15).
  5. In addition to the report given above: BUḤARĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (1862–1908), II, 40 (*buyū'* 102), 370 (*anbiyā'* 49); MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (1929–31), I, 135 (*īmān* 242); TIRMIDĪ, *Sunan* (1965–68), VII, 10–11 (*fitan* 54); ABŪ DĀ'UD, *Sunan* (1952), II, 430–32 (*malāḥim* 14); IBN MĀĞĀH, *Sunan* (1952–53), II, 1363 (*fitan* 33); IBN ḤANBAL, *Musnad* (1895–96), II, 240, 272, 290, 394, 406, 411, 437, 482–83, 493–94, 538; ṬABARĪ, *Tafsīr* (1955–), VI, 459 (#7145).

the cross back onto the story of the Prophet, and their hopes for vindication over against that symbol (and community) onto their recitals of history's end.

It is not only in the hadith literature that we find evidence for Islamic antipathy to the symbol of the cross. We turn now to a variety of other sources, including Islamic legal and historical literature and Christian chronicles and hagiography, to illustrate this antipathy during the first Islamic centuries.

## 2. In between: the historical record

The first decade after the death of Muḥammad was a period of extraordinary military success for the nascent Islamic state. Town after town in Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia capitulated to the Muslims, their Christian and Jewish inhabitants agreeing to the payment of the *ḡīzyah* in return for a number of guarantees which were spelled out in individual treaties. The contents of some of these treaties are preserved by Muslim writers such as the great legal scholar Abū Yūsuf (d. 798) in his *Kitāb al-ḥarāḡ*<sup>(6)</sup> and a number of historians, notably al-Balāḡurī (d. not later than 892) in his *Kitāb futūḥ al-buldān*.<sup>(7)</sup> A constant theme of these treaties is the degree to which the victorious Muslims would tolerate the Christian cult. Particular issues include whether Christians would be allowed to keep their crosses and whether and how often they might carry them in public procession outside the walls of their churches. In general, the peace treaties display a fair degree of tolerance: those of 'Umar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb with Jerusalem and Ludd stipulate that Christians may keep their crosses,<sup>(8)</sup> while those of Ḥālid b. al-Walīd with al-Ḥīrah and 'Ānāt pose no obstacle to processions with the cross on feast days.<sup>(9)</sup> Abū Yūsuf reports that Abū 'Ubaydah b. al-Ḡarrāḥ, the conqueror of northern Syria, initially prohibited processions with crosses, but after representations by Christians (and with the approval of the caliph 'Umar) agreed to allow a procession with crosses (but not banners) "on the day of their principle feast," on the condition that it take place outside the town, away from Muslim neighborhoods.<sup>(10)</sup> Only one of the early treaties, that of 'Iyāḍ b. Ḡunm with al-Raqqah, contains an outright prohibition of processions and the display of the cross.<sup>(11)</sup>

Abū Yūsuf reported the texts of the early peace treaties in his *Kitāb al-ḥarāḡ*, written at the request of Hārūn al-Rašīd (caliph 786-820), in order to justify an Islamic tolerance towards the Christian and Jewish cults that some Muslims clearly saw as

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6. FT FAGNON, *Kharādj* (1921).

7. Ed. DE GOEJE, *Liber* (1866). For a capable review of the treaties with extensive references to the primary sources, see FATTAL, *Statut* (1958), 34–60.

8. *Ibid.*, 45–47.

9. *Ibid.*, 38–40.

10. FAGNON, *Kharādj* (1921), 214–19.

11. FATTAL, *Statut* (1958), 40–41, 205.

excessive. Indeed, other works of early Islamic jurisprudence reflect a sterner mood. The *imām* al-Šāfi'ī (767-820) included in his *Kitāb al-umm* a "textbook" treaty which flatly reads, "You [Christians] shall not display the cross in any of the Muslims' towns."<sup>(12)</sup> And in later literature one finds preserved in a number of recensions the notorious "Covenant of 'Umar" (*šurūt 'Umar*). Among its many stipulations for the sharp demarcation and clear subordination of *ḍimmī* communities within the *Dār al-Islām* is one prohibiting the display of crosses and church books in Muslim streets.<sup>(13)</sup>

If the Islamic legal tradition reveals a gradual hardening of attitudes with respect to the public display of crosses, Christian sources provide anecdotal evidence for Muslim antipathy to the cross dating back to the first decades of the Islamic era. One of the oldest such reports in our possession is an account written in the mid-seventh century by a monk of Mount Sinai named Anastasius. Having described a vision experienced by a group of Armenian pilgrims at the top of the holy mountain, Anastasius went on to note that "some ignorant Saracens who saw this vision did not believe, and did not leave off reviling that holy place on account of these wonders *and the venerable crosses that were there*."<sup>(14)</sup> Another example of the first Muslims' antipathy to the cross is provided by later Christian chroniclers, who reported that the "emir" "Amrū" b. Sa'd (probably 'Umayr b. Sa'd al-Anṣārī, governor of Ḥimṣ in 641-44)<sup>(15)</sup> forbade the appearance of crosses outside of churches, including on the feast days when processions had been customary, and had crosses removed from exterior walls.<sup>(16)</sup>

While "Amrū's" prohibition was of a "local and transitory" nature, as Caetani pointed out many years ago,<sup>(17)</sup> the Marwānids who came to the caliphal throne a half-century later introduced caliphate-wide policies of Arabization and Islamicization which inevitably had a restrictive effect on the display of Christian symbols such as the cross.<sup>(18)</sup> 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān (caliph 685-705), whose building of the Dome of the Rock and reform of the coinage<sup>(19)</sup> are clear manifestations of an assertive and self-assured Islamic ideology, is reported to have ordered that crosses be torn down

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12. See below, p. 95.

13. For critical studies of the "Covenant of 'Umar" see TRITTON, *Caliphs* (1930) and FATTAL, *Statut* (1958), 60-69.

14. NAU, "Texte" (1902), 82 [FT NAU, "Récits" (1902), 38-39].

15. See above, p. 3, note 14.

16. See the two reports of this prohibition in the "Chronicle" of Michael the Syrian (CHABOT, *Michel* (1899-1910), IV, 421-22 [FT II, 431-32]), one of which also appears in the anonymous "Chronicle to the Year 1234" (idem, *1234* (1917-1920), I, 262-63 [LT I, 205]) and derives from the (now lost) "Ecclesiastical History" of Dionysius, Syrian Orthodox patriarch from 818 to 845. For more on "Amrū's" antipathy to the cross, see below, p. 94.

17. CAETANI, *Annali* (1905-26), III, 942-44, esp. 943-44, note 1.

18. For an overview of these policies, see GRIFFITH, "Tract" (1985), 62-65.

19. See below, pp. 76-77, III-12.

(and pigs killed),<sup>(20)</sup> while his brother 'Abd al-'Azīz, governor of Egypt (684-704), is said to have once ordered the destruction of all the crosses in the area under his authority.<sup>(21)</sup> 'Abd al-'Azīz' son 'Umar (caliph 717-20) introduced policies designed to encourage conversion to Islam; it is to *his* reign (and not that of 'Umar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb) that we are to look for the roots of the "Covenant of 'Umar."<sup>(22)</sup> His successor Yazīd b. 'Abd al-Malik (caliph 720-24) is well known for his "iconoclastic edict,"<sup>(23)</sup> which Oleg Grabar has plausibly suggested was an anti-Christian program which "took an iconoclastic turn in the sources."<sup>(24)</sup> As recalled by the Armenian historian Thomas Acruni (early 10th c.) or the Muslim al-Maqrīzī (1364-1442), Yazīd's measures went far beyond the destruction of representative art, and included the destruction of crosses.<sup>(25)</sup>

For the late Umayyad and early Abbasid periods there is no lack of anecdotal evidence for Muslim hostility to the cross, although it seems that occasional attempts to implement the stipulations of what became the "Covenant of 'Umar," including the ban on Christian processions with crosses, did not have lasting effect, as the following examples (which have specifically to do with the cross) illustrate. For the late Umayyad period, the "History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria" records instances of cross-reviling,<sup>(26)</sup> but also an instance of a public procession with crosses.<sup>(27)</sup> The Abbasid caliph Hārūn al-Rašīd may have revived some of the stipulations of the "Covenant of 'Umar,"<sup>(28)</sup> but the historical section of the Nestorian compilation *al-Mağdal* relates that his wife Umm al-Amīn gave gold and silver crosses to the Nestorian patriarch.<sup>(29)</sup> Michael the Syrian reports that while al-Mu'taṣim (caliph 833-42) put restrictions on the Christian cult, forbidding the appearance of crosses outside of churches, local officials were often willing, for a price, to turn a blind eye to the Christians' activities.<sup>(30)</sup> The most consistent and thorough-going anti-Christian program of which we know was that pursued by al-Mutawakkil (caliph 847-861), under whom what came to be known as "the Covenant of 'Umar" came to its full development. Muslim as well as Christian chroniclers report at length on his

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20. Again according to the "Chronicle" of Michael the Syrian; CHABOT, *Michel* (1899-1910), IV, 447 [FT II, 475].
  21. According to "The History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria." See below, p. 94.
  22. FATTAL, *Statut* (1958), 68-69, with further references.
  23. The fullest study is VASILIEV, "Edict" (1956).
  24. O. GRABAR, "Art" (1964), 84.
  25. Thomas reports that Yazīd had icons smashed, crosses torn down, and pigs massacred (see GERO, *Iconoclasm* (1973), 133), while al-Maqrīzī in his *al-Ḥiṭaṭ* reports that he had churches destroyed, crosses broken, and likenesses obliterated (see VASILIEV, "Edict" (1956), 39).
  26. EVETTS, *History* (1907-15), V, 101-103, 149-150.
  27. Ibid., V, 113-14, cf. 193-98.
  28. FATTAL, *Statut* (1958), 69.
  29. GISMONDI, *De patriarchis* (1899), I, 73.
  30. CHABOT, *Michel* (1899-1910), IV, 534 [FT III, 96-97]. The Christians of Melitene, however, were unsuccessful in evading the caliph's edict, to judge from a report in "The Chronicle to the Year 1234;" idem, *1234* (1917-20), II, 35 [FT II, 25].

campaign of enforcing the social isolation of non-Muslims<sup>(31)</sup> within the *Dār al-Islām* with measures including distinctive dress and riding habits for Christians, clear marking of Christians' homes, dismissal of Christians from public office, destruction of churches built in the Islamic period, confiscation of Christian property for building mosques, a ban on the use of the *nāqūs* -- and the prohibition of displaying crosses and holding religious processions.<sup>(32)</sup>

The evidence that we have reviewed, whether from Christian chronicles or from the Islamic historical, legal, or hadith literature, gives a fairly consistent picture. The Christian symbol of the cross was an object of aversion for many Muslims, just as (it was claimed) it had been for Muḥammad. Its public display was a topic of legal discussion and frequently the target of restrictive legislation, which, however, was not always rigorously enforced and which appears to have regularly fallen into desuetude. Occasional dramatic anti-Christian outbursts involved the destruction of crosses, although the standard pious view was that such cross-breaking could be left for Jesus to accomplish at the time of his return to earth.

### 3. Explanations

The Christian chroniclers Theophanes and Michael the Syrian had no difficulty in explaining the Muslims' aversion to the cross: it lay in the cross' mystical power to frustrate the Muslims' designs. They tell the following story (which I reproduce according to Michael):<sup>(33)</sup>

At that time [during the caliphate of 'Umar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb], while the Muslims were rebuilding the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem,<sup>(34)</sup> the building collapsed. The Jews said: "If you do not cast down the cross which is placed opposite the Temple on the Mount of Olives, the Temple cannot be built." And when they had cast down the cross, the building went up. For this reason they cast down many crosses, and the outcome of this in the kingdom of the Muslims was that they became haters of the cross and persecutors of the Christians because of their prostration to the cross.

Such a story no doubt found approval among its first Christian hearers, explaining Muslim hostility to the cross in a way that left them in no doubt as to its supernatural power. This explanation, however, belongs more to the realm of apologetics than to that of history.

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31. It should be noted that al-Mutawakkil's measures were not solely aimed at Christians. Jews were similarly affected, and Shi'ites were persecuted.

32. See, for example, ṬABARĪ, *Tārīḥ* (1960–69), IX, 171–74.

33. From the "Chronicle" of Michael the Syrian, CHABOT, *Michel* (1899–1910), IV, 421 [FT II, 431]. The corresponding story in the "Chronicle" of Theophanes is found in DE BOOR, *Chronographia* (1883–85), I, 342 (a.M. 6135) [ET TURTLEDOVE, *Chronicle* (1982), 42].

34. This is an anachronism, as the reconstructed "Temple of Solomon" can only be the Dome of the Rock, built under 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān. See below, pp. 111–12.

How shall we explain the Muslims' antipathy to the symbol of the cross? In the most general terms, it could be suggested that since the cross was the Christian symbol *par excellence*, aversion to it may simply have been a crystallization of whatever sense of shock and outrage, or perhaps insecurity and inferiority, was experienced by the early Muslims in their encounters with established Christian communities. In other words, discomfort with and resentment towards a social group came to be focussed upon that group's symbol. Now, a full analysis along these lines would lead us deep into what might be called the sociology of conquest, something clearly beyond the scope of the present study. The evidence in our possession, while not excluding the possible utility of such an analysis, indicates three much more specific significations and functions of the cross which can be shown to have offended Muslims' sensibilities and to have aroused their opposition. Antipathy to the cross involved (a) antipathy to *the token of victory of a hostile power*; (b) antipathy to *the object of a cult considered idolatrous*; and -- most importantly for the present study -- (c) antipathy to *a sign declaring doctrines held to be (at the very least) false, and frequently blasphemous*. In the pages that follow, we shall analyze each of these three offense-giving aspects of the cross in turn.

## A. "The Cross Has Conquered"

### 1. Introduction

The *Kitāb al-fitan* of Nu'aym b. Ḥammād (d. 842)<sup>(35)</sup> is a work reflecting the beliefs, hopes, and fears of the South Arabian Muslims of the garrison town of Ḥimṣ, on the front line of the struggle with Byzantium. In it we find several recensions of a hadith report of the Umayyad period, a simple version of which, narrated by Ḥālid b. Ma'dān, runs as follows:<sup>(36)</sup>

I said to 'Abd Allāh b. Busr: "[What about] the conquest of Constantinople?"

He answered: "She will not be conquered until there will be a peace between the Muslims and them [i.e., the Byzantines]. They will carry out a campaign together. When they depart, having gained booty, they will alight at their meadow. One of their men will raise a cross and say: 'The cross has conquered.' Then one of the Muslims will stand up to them, hit the cross, and break it. The Muslims will rise up and they will fight each other. God will give them the victory and at that time she will be conquered."<sup>(37)</sup>

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35. Preserved in BL or. 9449. Wilferd Madelung has presented Nu'aym's work in a pair of articles: MADELUNG, "Sufyānī" (1986) and "Prophecies" (1986).

36. This is the translation of MADELUNG, "Prophecies" (1986), 173.

37. Essentially the same report is related elsewhere in the *Kitāb al-fitan*, though with different *isnāds* and further details; see *ibid.*, 173–74. The one recension possessing an *isnād* extending back to Muḥammad may also be found in the hadith collections of Abū Da'ūd, Ibn Mājah, and Ibn

It is possible that the hadith report reflects memories of an actual truce between the Muslims and the Byzantines, later broken, such as that between 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān and Justinian II (emperor 685-95, 705-11).<sup>(38)</sup> But whatever its historical background, the report provides a vivid picture of the clash of Byzantine and Muslim attitudes with respect to the cross. For the Byzantines, after a victory it was natural to claim, "The cross has conquered" (*ḡalaba l-ṣalīb*). For the Muslims, such a claim was an offence which quite naturally provoked a violent response. The task of the following pages is to document and elucidate this clash.

## 2. The victorious cross and the Romans/Byzantines

### (a) *Before the advent of Islam*

The fourth Christian century witnessed the genesis of a great body of traditions about the cross, which may be roughly divided into two "families": one deals with the (material) True Cross upon which Christ was crucified and its rediscovery or "invention" at Jerusalem,<sup>(39)</sup> while the second has to do with appearances of celestial crosses (or related signs), in particular the dream or vision of Constantine and the appearance of a cross above Jerusalem early in the episcopacy of Cyril (bishop from ca. 350 to 386-87, with interruptions).<sup>(40)</sup> Whether taken together or separately, these families of tradition are a confused tangle of interpretation and reinterpretation, dependence and contradiction, which can be sorted out only with great difficulty.

However great the tradition-historical difficulties presented by this material, one can easily grasp its significance to the imperial and ecclesiastical political struggles of the age.<sup>(41)</sup> The role of the cross in ecclesiastical politics is well illustrated by the career of Cyril of Jerusalem, who skillfully exploited the presence of the True Cross in his city as well as the appearance of a heavenly cross over it to bolster his position

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Ḥanbal: ABŪ DA'ŪD, *Sunan* (1952), II,424-25 (*al-malāḥim* 2), IBN MĀĞAH, *Sunan* (1952-53), II,1369 (#4089, *fiṭan* 35), and IBN ḤANBAL, *Musnad* (1895-96), IV,91; V,371-72, 409.

38. According to Theophanes, the peace was made in 6178 a.M. (686-87 A.D.) and broken by Justinian ("thanks to a lack of good sense") in 6183 a.M. (691-92 A.D.); see DE BOOR, *Chronographia* (1883-85), I, 363-65 (a.M. 6178-83) [ET TURTLEDOVE, *Chronicle* (1982), 61-63]. For their numismatic battles over the cross, see below, pp. 76-77.

39. For a tracing of the invention traditions with extensive bibliography see VAN ESBROECK, "Croix" (1979), 111-21. A much older but useful study is STRAUBINGER, *Kreuzauffindungslegende* (1912). On Helena's pilgrimage to the Holy Land and her connection with the invention traditions, see HUNT, *Pilgrimage* (1982), 28-49, 128-31. I have not yet seen Jan Willem DRIJVERS, *Helena Augusta: The Mother of Constantine the Great and the Legend of Her Finding of the True Cross* (coll. Brill's Studies in Intellectual History, 27), Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992.

40. See again VAN ESBROECK, "Croix" (1979), 123-28, and also MOREAU, "Vision" (1953) and VOGT, "Kreuzerscheinungen" (1949).

41. This was clearly pointed out in VOGT, "Kreuzerscheinungen" (1949), e.g. at p. 598.

in his city as well as the appearance of a heavenly cross over it to bolster his position over against his Palestinian rivals and to claim a "crucial" place for Jerusalem in the Roman Christian construct of reality.<sup>(42)</sup> Of greater importance to the present study is the role of the cross *as a sign of divine favor toward the emperor*, or one aspiring to that dignity. This "legitimizing" role comes through clearly in the famous story from Eusebius' *Vita Constantini*<sup>(43)</sup> according to which Constantine and his army, while campaigning in Gaul, saw the sign of the cross in the afternoon sky with the inscription  $\tau\acute{o}\upsilon\tau\omega\ \nu\acute{\iota}\kappa\alpha$  ("in this, conquer").<sup>(44)</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem was probably aware of this account of Constantine's vision when, in his turn, he hastened to interpret the appearance of a heavenly cross over Jerusalem (traditionally but uncertainly dated to May 7, 351) as good news for the emperor Constantius II.<sup>(45)</sup> In his turn, an anonymous Arian historian writing around 380 made Cyril's Jerusalem cross appear directly to Constantius and his army in Illyricum as they were about to engage the pagan usurper Magnentius in battle at Mursa (351).<sup>(46)</sup> In all of this, one *motif* is constant: the cross as an unambiguous sign of military victory for the divinely-favored Christian emperor. The adoption of this *motif* into the standard Byzantine imperial ideology is splendidly illustrated by a coin of the Theodosius II, issued in 423 after a successful campaign against the Sassanians. On its reverse, in an adaptation of the familiar image of Nike planting a trophy of victory, a standing figure of winged Victory holds before her a broad-armed Latin cross.<sup>(47)</sup>

If the fourth century (with the "invention" of the True Cross and celestial appearances eagerly recounted by imperial propagandists) witnessed a blooming of the Christian cult of the cross, the early seventh century (with the loss and recovery of

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42. See *ibid.*, esp. 604, and WALKER, *Holy City* (1990), esp. 330–46. On the later development of the "True Cross" traditions as a reflection of Palestinian ecclesiastical politics, see the remarks of VAN ESBROECK, "Croix" (1979), 119.

43. I,28 (WINKELMANN, *Konstantin* (1975), 29–30). Although doubts about the authorship of the *Vita* have been expressed, contemporary scholarship tends to accept it as a genuine but posthumously published work of Eusebius (d. 339); see WALKER, *Holy City* (1990), 408.

44. As is well known, the heavenly sign shown to Constantine "evolved" with the development of the tradition. MOREAU ("Vision" (1953)) documents the evolution of Constantine's signs from the (often six-pointed) star of the cult of Sol Invictus to the Christ monogramme, which first appears on coins in 317. It is to be remembered that Constantine's Christian standard *par excellence* was the *labarum* rather than the cross. Even the coins of Constantius II (emperor 337–61), Vetrano (usurper 350), and Gallus Caesar (caesar 351–54) bearing the legend HOC SIGNO VICTOR ERIS portray the ruler in military dress holding not the cross, but the *labarum* (which, however, may be surmounted by a cross); see COHEN, *Monnaies* (1880–92), VII, 461; VIII, 4, 36.

45. Critical edition of Cyril's letter: BIHAIN, "Épître" (1973). Concerning Cyril's knowledge of the story of the *Vita Constantini* and the date of the appearance of the cross over Jerusalem, see VAN ESBROECK, "Croix" (1979), 123–24.

46. Fragments of the anonymous Arian chronicle are edited in BIDEZ, *Philostorgius* (1972), 202–41. The appearance of the heavenly cross is recounted at pp. 220–21.

47. BRECKINRIDGE, *Iconography* (1959), 34–35 and Plate III, 25.

the True Cross during the Persian wars) witnessed a revival of interest in it. Already in 615, the use of the cross as a *palladium* of the empire is witnessed by a coin of Heraclius bearing a cross and the inscription DEUS ADIUTA ROMANI.<sup>(48)</sup> As Heraclius set off in 622 for his first campaign in Persia his army was preceded by a fragment of the True Cross.<sup>(49)</sup> Heraclius was finally successful in his Persian wars, and the recovery and restoration of the True Cross to Jerusalem in 630 provided the occasion for a remarkable work by his official poet, George of Pisidia.<sup>(50)</sup> For George, Heraclius was a providentially sent new Constantine who, strengthened by the life-giving Cross, was superior to all kings.<sup>(51)</sup> The Cross, however, does not merely play a role in the background of the struggle as George describes it. Rather, the Cross *itself* took a direct part in the battle against the enemy: Khusraw felt it like a lance in his heart,<sup>(52)</sup> and it appeared to the enemy as a new Ark of the Covenant, which launched living arrows against them.<sup>(53)</sup>

(b) *After the advent of Islam*

Archaeological, historiographical, and liturgical evidence combine to give a picture of an extremely lively cult of the cross in a Byzantium engaged in a desperate struggle for survival with Islam. To begin with archaeology, Nicole Thierry has noted the centrality of the cross to the decoration of churches in Cappadocia from the period of the Muslim invasions and raids (that is, from the seventh through the mid-ninth centuries).<sup>(54)</sup> In one church, the central cross in an apse painting is labelled ΣΗΓΝΟΝ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΚΩΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥ ("sign of the holy Constantine").<sup>(55)</sup> This may be compared with a common soldier's amulet bearing, on one side, a cross and the legend EN ΤΟΥΤΟ ΝΙΚΑ.<sup>(56)</sup> Thierry concludes that the Cappadocian evidence points to a "preferential veneration for the cross" to be explained by its military value in a region continually on the front lines of the struggle with the Muslims.<sup>(57)</sup> In Cappadocia this cross-piety gave way to other forms of piety in the mid-ninth century as the military threat receded (and as iconoclasm came to an end),<sup>(58)</sup> although

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48. A. GRABAR, *Iconoclisme* (1957), photograph 6, or THIERRY, "Culte" (1981), 207.

49. FROLOW, *Relique* (1961), 189. Note that we have a similar report about the emperor Maurice from nearly a century earlier: his army was preceded by a fragment of the True Cross, fixed on a golden lance, as it departed for Thrace in 538 A.D.; *ibid.*, 183.

50. *In restitutionem S. Crucis*, in PERTUSI, *Georgio di Pisidia* (1959), 225–39 (ed., IT, and commentary).

51. *Ibid.*, 228, lines 61–66.

52. *Ibid.*, lines 68–69.

53. *Ibid.*, lines 73–77.

54. THIERRY, "Culte" (1981).

55. *Ibid.*, 213–15.

56. *Ibid.*, 215. Thierry gives other evidence for the preservation of the Constantinian formula EN ΤΟΥΤΟ ΝΙΚΑ in military tradition at pp. 207–8.

57. *Ibid.*, 218.

58. *Ibid.*, 218–22.

military situation remained precarious.<sup>(59)</sup>

Cross-piety and iconoclasm were a natural match in Byzantium; only on the extreme fringes of the Christian community did objections to the veneration of icons carry over to the veneration of the cross.<sup>(60)</sup> Iconoclasm, the life-and-death struggle with Islam, and the cult of the victorious cross come together with great vividness in a propaganda piece of the iconoclast emperor Leo III (717-41), preserved by the Armenian historiographer Stephen of Tarōn (11th c.).<sup>(61)</sup> During the campaign of 717 against Constantinople, the Muslim general Maslamah had threatened Leo as follows:<sup>(62)</sup>

Now, I vowed not to return to my land until I shall have taken away your kingdom, and destroyed your fortified city, and made the so-called Sophia, which is the house of your worship, into a bathhouse for my troops, and broken the wood of that cross, which you adore, over your head.

After prayer, Leo responded:<sup>(63)</sup>

Why do you exult in wickedness, O one powerful in iniquity? If the rod of Moses, which was the archetype of the cross of Christ, made Pharaoh sink, even more the standard of the holy cross will destroy you.

Then the harbor was closed with a chain, and the emperor gave orders not to attack. Instead,<sup>(64)</sup>

the king himself took the unconquerable standard upon his shoulders, accompanied by the patriarch and the multitude of the populace, with candles and incense, raising a hymn, and came through the gate of the city. The king struck with the standard of the cross the water of the sea, saying thrice, "Help us, Christ, Savior of the world." And straightway the depths of the sea were stirred and drowned the army of Ishmael.

Not only is Leo portrayed "as a veritable Moses *redivivus*, who causes the infidel to drown by the power of the cross,"<sup>(65)</sup> he becomes the latest in a line of emperors -- Constantine, Constantius, Heraclius -- for whom victory in battle is to be attributed to

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59. Ibid., 227.

60. We possess seventh-century Armenian texts which point to the existence of an Armenian iconoclastic movement opposed to the cult of images *and* of the cross; see DER NERSESSIAN, "Apologie" (1944-45), esp. 73-74. Recall also the doctrine of the monk Baḥīrā/Sargīs, who, according to the Arabic and Syriac stories, believed that there should be no more than one cross in a church, and (so the Syriac text) that of wood; see above, p. 24.

61. The story is studied and its literary history sorted out in GERO, *Iconoclasm* (1973), 32-43. It is perhaps best known in the recension of the revisor of Levond's history, a FT of which has been published: CHAHNAZARIAN, *Histoire* (1858). The story of the siege of 717 is at pp. 105-8.

62. Slightly adapted from the ET of GERO, *Iconoclasm* (1973), 134-35.

63. Ibid., 135.

64. Ibid., 136.

65. Ibid., 37.

Constantine, Constantius, Heraclius – for whom victory in battle is to be attributed to the cross.

At the beginning of this century P. Bernardakis studied the liturgical dimensions of this "ardent devotion of the easterners for the cross, which they regarded as the sole pledge of victory," a devotion fanned into full flame in Byzantium both by fears aroused by the Islamic invasions and by the presence of the near totality of the True Cross in Constantinople after its transfer from Jerusalem in 635.<sup>(66)</sup> He pointed out that "for the Greeks, the cross is not solely the sign of redemption, but is also the national emblem *par excellence*, the invincible pledge of victory presented by God Himself to Constantine at the beginning of his reign, at the foundation of the Byzantine monarchy."<sup>(67)</sup> Bernardakis gives example upon example from the hymns of the Byzantine liturgy for the various feasts of the cross<sup>(68)</sup> in which the cross is extolled and invoked as a pledge of the emperor's victory and of the empire's preservation.<sup>(69)</sup> The flavor of these hymns is well represented by the *κοντάκιον* of the Feast of the Exaltation, sung during the very act of exalting (the ὕψωσις) and adoring the True Cross:<sup>(70)</sup>

O you who were raised voluntarily upon the cross, Christ our God: extend your mercy upon the new community which bears your name, and through your might give joy to our faithful kings by granting them victory against their enemies. May they have your help as a weapon of peace, an invincible trophy.

A hymn sung during the adoration of the cross during the mid-Lent festival, attributed to Leo VI "The Wise" (emperor 886-912), specifies the enemy:<sup>(71)</sup>

In you [O Cross] our very faithful kings are glorified, because it is by your might that they powerfully subdue the Ishmaelite people.

Church decoration from contested regions, amulets carried by simple soldiers, victory accounts put out by imperial propagandists, and the hymns of the faithful sung on various occasions throughout the year *all* point to the centrality of the cross as a pledge of imperial victory and personal and communal protection in a Byzantium repeatedly battling for its national life between the seventh and the ninth centuries.

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66. BERNARDAKIS, "Culte" (1901–2). The quotation is from p. 199.

67. Ibid.

68. Of special importance is the nine-day Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, climaxing on September 14. Also to be noted are: the adoration of the cross on the third Sunday in Lent (celebrated in Constantinople at least from the early eighth century); the procession of the cross on August 1 (later eighth century); and the observance of the appearance of the cross over Jerusalem on May 7 (ninth century). See *ibid.*, 195–202, 257–64.

69. See *ibid.*, 199–200, 260–62.

70. Ὁ ὕψωθεὶς ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ, *ibid.*, 199.

71. *Ibid.*, 260.

But if the cross was for the Byzantines a sign of national and military hope, for their *opponents*, the Muslims, the cross could only be a sign of all they opposed. It is therefore no mystery that Muslims developed an aversion to the symbol that, for the Byzantines, was "the pledge of universal domination and the national standard."<sup>(72)</sup>

(c) *A numismatic battle of symbols*

One final example may serve to provide a very concrete illustration of the Byzantine-Islamic clash of attitudes towards the cross. In the closing years of the seventh century, the Umayyad caliph 'Abd al-Malik and the Byzantine emperor Justinian II fought an ideological battle *on gold coins*.<sup>(73)</sup> The cross, naturally, was at the center of the battle.

The earliest gold coins issued by Justinian II (who acceded to the throne in 685) were of a kind typical of much of the late sixth and seventh centuries, featuring the emperor wearing a crown and holding an orb, both surmounted by crosses, and, on the reverse, a cross potent on three steps.<sup>(74)</sup> Such coins had been in circulation in the Islamic lands as well as in Byzantium: al-Balāḍurī reports that the gold coins of Heraclius had been in circulation in Mecca before the rise of Islam,<sup>(75)</sup> and that the early Umayyads used to import gold coins from Byzantium in exchange for papyrus.<sup>(76)</sup> According to some reports Mu'āwiyah had attempted to issue his own dīnārs<sup>(77)</sup> but had failed. According to the Syriac "Maronite Chronicle," his issue "was not accepted because there was no cross on it."<sup>(78)</sup>

This state of affairs changed under 'Abd al-Malik.<sup>(79)</sup> His first issues, probably to be dated around 690,<sup>(80)</sup> were little more than an imitation of Byzantine coins

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72. Ibid., 200.

73. For what follows, see especially MILES, "Coinage" (1967) for 'Abd al-Malik's coins, and BRECKINRIDGE, *Iconography* (1959) for Justinian's. Extensive bibliography will be found in both places.

74. See BRECKINRIDGE, *Iconography* (1959), 20–22 and Plate I, 1–4; A. GRABAR, *Iconoclasme* (1957), photographs 10–11. For earlier coins with similar features see *ibid.*, photographs 2–3 (Tiberias II), 6 (Heraclius), 8 (Constans II), 9–10 (Constantine IV).

75. In the *Kitāb futūḥ al-buldān*, DE GOEJE, *Liber* (1866), 465.

76. Ibid., 240, or IBN QUTAYBAH, *Uyūn* (1925–30), I, 198.

77. So al-Maqrīzī in his *Šudūr al-'uqūd*, MAYER, *'Uqūd* (1933), 4.

78. BROOKS, *Chronica* (1904), 71/18–20.

79. For the Islamic reports of his reform see especially DE GOEJE, *Liber* (1866), 467–8 and IBN QUTAYBAH, *Uyūn* (1925–30), I, 198–99. 'Abd al-Malik's coinage reform is noted by a number of Christian historians, including Theophanes ("Chronography," a.M. 6183 (DE BOOR, *Chronographia* (1883–85), I, 365)) and the authors of a number of Syriac histories: the "Chronicle to the Year 819" (BARŠAWM, "819" (1920), 13), the "Chronicle to the Year 846" (BROOKS, *Chronica* (1904), 232), and the secular "Chronicle" of Gregory Abū I-Faraġ "Bar Hebraeus" (BUDGE, *Chronography* (1932), I, 104 [ET]).

80. On the dating of these first Islamic gold coins see MILES, "Coinage" (1967), 224–29.

similar to that of Justinian just described *but with the cross-bars removed from crosses*.<sup>(81)</sup> This was followed by an issue (of 691 or 692) in which the vertical shafts "left over" from crosses on crowns and orbs were eliminated, what remained of the cross potent on the reverse was transformed into a rod ending in a knob, and on which the Kufic legends *بسم الله لا اله الا الله وحده* ("In the name of God: there is no god but God alone") and *محمد رسول الله* ("Muḥammad is the apostle of God") appeared.<sup>(82)</sup>

Very possibly as a response to this act of presumption (in the Byzantine emperor's view, since the issuing of gold coins was an imperial prerogative), around the year 692 Justinian issued a new type of gold coin with the bust of *Christ* rather than the emperor on the obverse, with a cross behind his head and the legend *IHS CRISTOS REX REGNANTIUM* ("Jesus Christ, king of those who reign"). The reverse portrayed the emperor standing holding the cross potent on two steps, with the legend *D[ominus] IUSTINIANUS SERU[us] CHRISTI* ("Lord Justinian, servant of Christ").<sup>(83)</sup> 'Abd al-Malik responded in 693 with his Standing Caliph *dīnār*, named for the standing sword-girt caliph on the obverse (obviously a response to the standing cross-wielding emperor of Justinian's issue), while the reverse continued to portray the rod with knob on steps.<sup>(84)</sup> A few years later, however, 'Abd al-Malik renounced iconography altogether with his issue (in 696-97) of purely epigraphical coins, inscribed with *لا اله الا الله وحده لا شريك له* ("There is no god but God alone. He has no associate.") and the Qur'ānic passages *al-Tawbah* (9):33 and *al-Iḥlās* (112).<sup>(85)</sup>

In the course of 'Abd al-Malik's reform, then, crosses were first deprived of their cross-bars, and then either eliminated altogether or transformed into a rod with knob, very possibly representing the *qaḍīb* or sceptre of the prophet Muḥammad.<sup>(86)</sup> Finally, where the cross potent had once proudly stood on the reverse of coins one finds instead the words of *Sūrat al-Iḥlās*: *الله احد الله الصمد لم يلد ولم يولد* ("God is One, the Everlasting Refuge, who has not begotten and has not been begotten"). In less than a decade, crosses had given way to anti-Christian polemic on the gold coins in official use by the Umayyad caliph.

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81. Ibid., 207–10 and Plate XLV, 1–8.

82. Ibid., 210–11 and Plate XLV, 9–10 and XLVI, 1.

83. BRECKINRIDGE, *Iconography* (1959), 22 and Plate I,5; A. GRABAR, *Iconoclasme* (1957), photographs 12–14.

84. MILES, "Coinage" (1967), 212–24 and Plate XLVI, 2–6; A. GRABAR, *Iconoclasme* (1957), photograph 62.

85. MILES, "Coinage" (1967), Plate XLVI, 7; A. GRABAR, *Iconoclasme* (1957), photographs 65–66.

86. Ibid., 73.

### 3. The victorious cross and Christians in the *Dār al-Islām*

The complex of piety and ideology surrounding the cross as the imperial standard of victory did not disappear from the hearts and minds of Christians in Byzantium's lost eastern provinces, despite Islam's triumph. The stories of Constantine's vision, the "invention" of the True Cross, and its loss to the Persians and recovery by Heraclius continued to circulate and were translated into Arabic at an early date.<sup>(87)</sup> Occasions for the rehearsal of these accounts were provided by liturgical feasts of the cross, especially the Feast of the Cross celebrated on September 13 or 14 by Melkites, Jacobites, and Nestorians alike.<sup>(88)</sup>

Of course, the pressure of military and political realities shaped the way in which the first generations of Christian writers living within the Islamic caliphate made use of the cross/victory nexus of traditions and ideas. They faced the challenge of how *credibly* to make use of the tradition of the victory-giving cross in such a way as to give hope to Christian communities fallen under the Muslims' sway. This was no mean challenge, given the fact that the Christian Byzantines, who possessed the True Cross and marched behind the standard of the cross, had been reduced to a desperate struggle for national survival.

#### (a) *The cross on the dīnār*

Quite naturally, the first generations of Christian writers to find themselves under Islamic rule were quick to seize on whatever events or phenomena might possibly be construed as evidence of the continuing validity of their vision of religio-political truth. The inability of caliphs before 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān to issue their own dīnārs could be seen as just such a phenomenon. Thus the author of

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87. We note, for example, the presence of Arabic versions of these accounts in ninth- and tenth-century manuscripts from Mount Sinai. The "invention" is recounted in a tenth-century manuscript presently divided between Bryn Mawr College, the University of Leiden, and the Mingana collection; see ESBROECK, "Remembrement" (1982), esp. 144–45. Ancient Arabic versions of Antiochus Strategos' "Capture of Jerusalem" are found in Sinai ar. NF perg. 1 (868 A.D.) and Sinai ar. 428 and 520 (both of the 10th c.; these are edited with an LT in GARITTE, *Expugnationis* (1973)). Also to be noted is the account of Constantine's vision of and victory through the cross, and of the invention of the True Cross by St. Helena, in the Latin "Letter of Leo," which may derive from a ninth- or tenth-century Arabic original.

88. See NAU, "Fête" (1914), 225, 229. Nau summarizes a Syriac sermon for the Feast of the Cross by Moses bar Kepha (815–903), which provides an excellent example of the way in which the Constantine and "invention" traditions were rehearsed by Jacobites in the ninth century.

Question 42 of the "Questions Addressed to Antiochus the *Dux*"<sup>(89)</sup> responded to the question "From whence is it clear that the faith in which we Christians believe is superior to all other faiths under heaven?" with the statement that the Muslims "not only were unable to crush the Emperor, but they were unable to delete his image, with that of the cross, from coins, even though several tyrants attempted to do so."<sup>(90)</sup> Similarly, in the "Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo," perhaps written in Egypt in the 670s,<sup>(91)</sup> the Christian says: "The very coinage displays the Cross, which Cross reigns everywhere, is current everywhere."<sup>(92)</sup>

Christians who had taken comfort from the inability of caliphs to be rid of the image of the emperor and the cross on gold coins could not have been but severely shaken by the success of 'Abd al-Malik's reform. One Christian reaction to this reform is found in the Coptic "Apocalypse of (pseudo-) Athanasius,"<sup>(93)</sup> written within a few decades of the event.<sup>(94)</sup> This work views 'Abd al-Malik's innovations in decidedly apocalyptic terms, as one of the depredations of the Ishmaelites whose advent is described as "the labor pains of the end":<sup>(95)</sup>

First, that nation will destroy the gold on which there is the image of the Cross of Our Lord, Our God, in order to make all the countries under its rule mint their own gold with the name of a beast written on it, the number of whose name is six hundred and sixty-six.

For the Egyptian Christian author of the work, the effacement of the cross from gold coins and the appearance of the name of Muḥammad could only be a sign of the impending End.<sup>(96)</sup>

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89. On this work see WILLIAMS, *Adversus Judaios* (1935), 160–62; DÉROUCHE, "Polémique" (1991), 279.
90. PG 28, 623–24. The connection between this passage and Mu'awiyah's unsuccessful monetary reform was pointed out in CRONE/COOK, *Hagarism* (1977), 11.
91. See WILLIAMS, *Adversus Judaios* (1935), 169–74; DÉROUCHE, "Polémique" (1991), 279. I suggest a date in the 670s on the basis of the text's statement that the Jews have been *scattered* for 600 years.
92. Cited in WILLIAMS, *Adversus Judaeos* (1935), 173. I have not been able to find a copy of the edition of this text: A.C. McGIFFERT, *Dialogue between a Christian and a Jew*, Marburg: 1889.
93. Edition, ET and study in MARTINEZ, *Apocalyptic* (1985), 248–590. See also ORLANDI, *Omèlie* (1981), 73–91 [IT], and idem, "Testo" (1985).
94. MARTINEZ (*Apocalyptic* (1985), 267) argues that the text dates from "the decade preceding 724."
95. Ibid., 528–29. The following is Martinez' ET, pp. 529–30, of the Coptic text found at p. 372.
96. Another apocalyptic text which refers to the coinage reform is the "Letter of (pseudo-) Pisentius" (ed. and FT in PÉRIER, "Pisuntios" (1914); on the monetary reform, see p. 306 [FT 318]).

(b) *The cross in apocalyptic imagination*

If the cross/emperor/victory complex of tradition and conviction failed to describe the *present* reality of Christians living under Islamic rule, one possibility for continuators of the tradition was to use it to describe *the future*. This is what we find in the remarkable Syriac "Apocalypse of (pseudo-) Methodius,"<sup>(97)</sup> written in northern Mesopotamia in the second half of the seventh century.<sup>(98)</sup> The work is an attempt to give a comprehensive view of history which is capable of explaining the advent of the Muslims, but which sustains hope in the final victory of the Christian Romans. As Reinink in particular emphasized, one feature of this attempt is a constant stress on the meaning of the cross.<sup>(99)</sup> The "Ishmaelites" might at first overpower all the peoples they encounter, but "after ten weeks of those years they also will be overpowered and subjected by the kingdom of Rome, . . . because it possesses truly that unconquerable weapon that conquers all."<sup>(100)</sup> Soon afterwards it is explicitly stated that the "unconquerable weapon" possessed by Rome is the holy Cross:<sup>(101)</sup>

For there is no people or kingdom under heaven that can overpower the kingdom of the Christians as long as it possesses a place of refuge in the life-giving Cross, which is set up in the center of the earth and possesses its power over height and depth. . . . Which is the power or kingdom of people below heaven that is mighty and strong in its power and will be able to prevail over the great power of the Holy Cross in which the kingdom of the Greeks, that is of the Romans, possesses a place of refuge?

And thus the day will come, says the author, when a king of the Greeks will go forth against the Ishmaelites, defeat them, and bring in "the last peace of the perfection of the world," when "men will sit down in great peace and the churches will arise

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97. Two editions and three versions of the work appeared in 1985: MARTINEZ, *Apocalyptic* (1985), 58–201 (ed. and ET); SUERMANN, *Reaktion* (1985), 34–85 (ed. and GT); ALEXANDER, *Tradition* (1985), 36–51 (ET).

98. There is not yet any scholarly consensus with regard to the ecclesial provenance and the date of the work. Very plausible arguments for a Nestorian provenance of the work are advanced in REININK, "Ismael" (1982). Although ALEXANDER (*Empire* (1978), essay XII, 68–68a) abandoned his previous thesis that the work reflected an intra-Monophysite polemic, SUERMANN (*Reaktion* (1985), 161) continues to lean towards a Jacobite provenance. To complete the disagreement, MARTINEZ (*Apocalyptic* (1985), 27–28) thinks that the author may have been a Melkite. With regard to the date, ALEXANDER ("Migration" (1971), 57, 65–66 (note 29)) and SUERMANN (*Reaktion* (1985), 160–61) opt for the period between 644 and 674, while BROCK ("Sources" (1976), 34, REININK ("Ismael" (1982), 339 note 19), and (with great caution) MARTINEZ (*Apocalyptic* (1985), 28–32) opt for the period between 685 and 692.

99. REININK, "Ismael" (1982), 340–41 (note 25). For more comprehensive interpretations of the work see ALEXANDER, *Tradition* (1985), 13–33 and MARTINEZ, "Genre" (1987), 340–52.

100. This is the translation of ALEXANDER, *Tradition* (1985), 39.

101. *Ibid.*, 42.

nearby, and cities will be built and priests will be freed from the tax, and priests and men will rest . . . from labor and tiredness and torture."<sup>(102)</sup>

This, however, is but the penultimate phase of human history. According to the author of the apocalypse, "the priesthood and the kingship and the Holy Cross" constituted that "restrainer" (ὁ κατέχων) before whose removal the Son of Perdition could not be revealed (according to his exegesis of 2 Thessalonians 2:3-8). This "removal" takes place, in a way conforming to Psalm 68:32 (Peshitta) and 1 Corinthians 15:24, as follows:<sup>(103)</sup>

[T]hen the king of the Greeks will go up and will stand on Golgotha and the Holy Cross will be set in that place in which it was set up when it carried the Christ. And the king of the Greeks will place his diadem on top of the Holy Cross, and will stretch out his two hands to heaven and will hand over the kingship to God the Father. And the Holy Cross on which Christ was crucified will be raised to heaven and the crown of kingship with it . . . . [A]nd the king of the Greeks will give up his soul to his creator. And immediately every leader and every authority and all powers will cease. And immediately the Son of Perdition will be revealed . . . .

But after a certain period Christ will come, preceded by his cross, and will deliver the Son of Perdition to Hell-fire and his saints to his heavenly kingdom.

The tangle of traditions that come together in "The Apocalypse of (pseudo-) Methodius," as well as the work's extraordinary influence on subsequent apocalyptic literature, also in medieval Europe, have been studied by others.<sup>(104)</sup> What is important here is the fact that the work was widely read by Christians in the *Dār al-Islām*, and played a major role in shaping their apocalyptic imagination. In this way a long tradition of ideas about the Roman emperor victorious through the invincible cross found a home in the hopes and dreams of Christians living as *ḍimmīs* under Islamic rule.

### (c) *The cross and the Abbasid revolt*

Another example of the way traditions about the victory-bestowing cross came to expression in the *Dār al-Islām* is to be found in the "History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria," Life 46 (Patriarch Michael I, 744-68), originally written in Coptic in about 770 A.D. by one Yūḥannā, spiritual son of Mūsā, bishop of Wasīm.<sup>(105)</sup> Yūḥanna's account of the Abbasid revolt and the end of the Umayyad caliph Marwān II (744-50) – an end which involved much devastation in Egypt and great hardship for Michael – is punctuated by references to the cross. According to Yūḥannā, it was

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102. Ibid., 49.

103. Ibid., 50.

104. See the works mentioned in note 97 above. On the influence of the apocalypse on subsequent writings, see ALEXANDER, "Migration" (1971).

105. On the sources and redaction the "History of the Patriarchs" see DEN HEIJER, *Historiographie* (1989).

*through the sign of the cross* that the Abbasid rebels achieved victory against enormous odds in their struggle against the Umayyad state:<sup>(106)</sup>

And Abu Muslim saw the angel of the Lord, with a golden rod in his hand, on the top of which was a Cross, putting his enemies to flight; for, wherever the Cross approached, he saw them fall dead before it. So the followers of Abd Allah and Abu Muslim took the horses and weapons of the enemy.

And as a result, Abū Muslim adopted the cross as his standard:<sup>(107)</sup>

So the old man Abu Muslim bade his soldiers make crosses of every kind, and place them on their breasts, saying to them: "By means of this sign God has given us the victory, and it has conquered the empire for us."

Remarkably, Yūḥannā has made Abū Muslim (d. 755), the great leader of the Abbasid rebellion, into a new Constantine! Thereby he found a way to uphold the truth of traditional Christian claims about the victory-giving cross, using them to explain events that had taken place within living memory. What is startling about Yūḥannā's narrative, of course, is that the beneficiaries of the power of the victory-giving cross were *other* than a Christian emperor and his followers -- in fact, other than Christians! Furthermore, as Yūḥannā's readers knew full well, the Abbasids did not subsequently become followers of the cross. Therefore Yūḥannā was constrained to report some pages later that in their triumph "the Khorassanians forgot that it was God who had given them the government, and neglected the holy Cross which had gained them the victory."<sup>(108)</sup>

#### (d) *The cross and the Byzantine revival*

Because of the political and military realities that pertained during the greater part of the eighth and ninth centuries, most of the Christian writers surveyed in the present study were quite restrained in their use of the cross/victory nexus of traditions and ideas. Reaching back into the biblical and patristic heritage, as well as a long tradition of popular cross-piety,<sup>(109)</sup> they tended to describe the victory of the cross in spiritual and thaumaturgic rather than military terms. For all of the Christian apologists surveyed here, the cross is indeed a sign of victory – but *over Satan*.<sup>(110)</sup> It

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106. The following is the ET of EVETTS, *History* (1907–15), V, 152.

107. Ibid., 153.

108. Ibid., 189.

109. For a good discussion of the cross in patristic teaching, liturgy, and popular Byzantine piety, see STOCKMEIER, *Chrysostomus* (1966), 192–254. The apotropaic function of the cross in Byzantium is richly illustrated in MAGUIRE, *House* (1989), 18–22 and the illustrations referred to there.

110. For an example from *al-Ġāmi' wuḡūh al-īmān*, see below, pp. 161–62.

is an efficacious weapon -- *against the demons*.<sup>(111)</sup> It is powerful -- *in every manner of life-giving and life-preserving miracle*.<sup>(112)</sup> Within the *Dār al-Islām* stories about miracles done through the virtue of the cross did, of course, bear an apologetic and community-sustaining point: by means of these miracles, God Himself has borne witness to the truth of the *religion* of the cross.<sup>(113)</sup> But what we do *not* generally find in the Arabic Christian apologies of the eighth and ninth centuries is any claim that the cross is a sign and pledge of *military* victory.

This fact may strike modern Christians as a salutary development, a purging of a sub-Christian element from one particular stream of the Christian apologetic tradition. However, our references to the "Apocalypse of (pseudo-) Methodius" and to Life 46 of "The History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria" have shown that the complex of ideas in which the cross was a pledge of military victory continued to live a sort of underground existence in the apocalyptic and historical imaginations of Christians living in the *Dār al-Islām*. Once Christians marching behind the standard of the cross were once again achieving victories -- as began to happen, though not without setbacks, in the second half of the ninth century -- the cross as a pledge of military victory reappeared also in their *apologetic* imagination. This, at least, is a plausible explanation for the appearance of the claim that the cross is the "flag of triumph and victory *over all enemies*"<sup>(114)</sup> in the additions of the *beta*-recension of the Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī debate, which may be dated to the late ninth or early tenth century.<sup>(115)</sup> The same claim is made yet more sharply in some recensions of the "Abū Qurrah" debate: "there is no king who goes out to battle his foe, and has with him the sign of the cross, but that the victory is his."<sup>(116)</sup> It is inconceivable that the historical Abū Qurrah would have made such a claim at the court of al-Ma'mūn! On the other hand, such a claim would fit perfectly well with the brilliant series of Byzantine military successes achieved in the east between 934 (the capture of Melitene) and 975, by

111. E.g., in *al-Burhān* of Peter of Bayt Ra's, where the cross is the third of the "medicines and ointments" (*al-adwiyah wa-l-marāhim*) left us by Christ, after baptism and the eucharist. See CACHIA, *Demonstration* (1960-61), I, 158 (#288).

112. There is no end to the examples that can be given of healings, exorcisms, and various sorts of wonders done with the sign of the cross; "The History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria" is full of them. For an example from the Arabic apologetic literature we might mention the trial by ordeal of Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī at the conclusion of the debate-report. According to the story, Ibrāhīm signed the cup of poison with the cross before drinking it (without harm), exorcised the emir's servant-girl with the sign of the cross, and made the sign of the cross before putting his hands in the fire (again, without harm). See MARCUZZO, *Dialogue* (1986), 516-27 (#546-65, in particular #552, 558, and 565).

113. On the role of evidentiary miracles in the Arabic Christian apologies, see below, pp. 277-80.

114. راية النصر والغلبة على جميع الأعضاء in Vatican ar. 136, f. 142<sup>r</sup>. Other manuscripts of the *beta*-recension give similar (but not identical) expressions. For the passage of the *alpha*-recension of which this is an expansion, see below, p. 92.

115. See above, pp. 26-28.

116. أنه ليس يخرج ملك لمحاربة عدوه ومعه علامة الصليب إلا وكانت الغلبة له . . . , in Paris ar. 70, f. 181<sup>v</sup>/4-7.

which time most of Syria and Palestine and a large part of Mesopotamia were under Byzantine control.<sup>(117)</sup> The re-emergence of the claim of military victory through the cross in Arabic apologetic literature corresponds to a change of tone easily discerned in the Byzantine polemical literature: while as violent a polemicist as Nicetas of Byzantium (second half of the 9th c.) had to give an uncharacteristically sober explanation of the military successes of the "Hagarenes" as divine chastisement,<sup>(118)</sup> the "Letter to the Emir of Damascus," dated by its editor to 920-22, can taunt the emir about recent military reverses,<sup>(119)</sup> while an insulting Arabic poem sent on the authority of the Byzantine emperor Nicephoros to the caliph al-Muṭṭī' in 966-67 can list no fewer than fifteen victories won between 943 and 966.<sup>(120)</sup>

#### 4. A concluding comment

Our investigations into Christian convictions and dreams about the victory-giving cross have ranged over a period of six centuries, and have crossed the frontier between the empire and the caliphate. These have demonstrated the conceptual accuracy of the hadith report of Ḥālid b. Ma'dān with which we began our discussion. The statement "The cross has conquered" on the lips of a Christian warrior is no oddity, but accurately expresses an important element not only in Roman/Byzantine imperial ideology, but also in the deep and quietly-nurtured hopes of Christians living within the *Dār al-Islām*. Christians on *both* sides of the frontier looked to the cross as a divine pledge of final victory – *over Islam*. Can there be any wonder that Muslims reacted to the cross with aversion?

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117. The correspondence between Christian apologetic claims for the military virtues of the cross and the Byzantine successes of the tenth century was pointed out by Armand Abel, e.g. in ABEL, "St. Théodore" (1949), 234–36.

118. At the end of his "Refutation of the Qur'ān," XXX, in *PG* 105, 801–5 [French summary in A.-T. KHOURY, *Théologiens* (1969), 161–62]. One may compare the "Passion of the Forty-Two Martyrs of Amorium" written by Evodius (d. 883), who concludes that monophysitism, monotheletism, and iconoclasm had provoked God's wrath, and that the Muslims were the rod with which He chastised the Christians; *ibid.*, 163–79.

119. The most recent edition of the work is KARLIN-HAYTER, "Letter" (1959–60) [FT ABEL, "Lettre" (1954)]. The taunt is found at p. 300/23–30 [FT 386]. On the dating, see pp. 284–85.

120. VON GRÜNEBAUM, "Polemik" (1937), esp. 45–46.

## B. "Fuel for the Flames of Hell"

### 1. Introduction

In his book *La croix dans l'Islam*, Habib Zayat brought together a number of interesting verses about the cross by Muslim poets of the Umayyad period.<sup>(121)</sup> The poet Ġarīr,<sup>(122)</sup> a favorite of 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz (caliph 717-20), once observed the veneration of the cross and commented as follows:<sup>(123)</sup>

رَأَيْتُ بَدِيرَ سَمْعَانَ صَلِيبًا      تَقَبَّلَهُ الشَّوَادِنُ وَالظُّبَاءُ  
تَعْظُمُهُ الْقَسُوسُ وَتَحْتَوِيهِ      فَتَرْشِفُهُ وَيَخْنُقُهَا الْبُكَاءُ  
فَقُلْتُ مَهْ لَهُمْ هَلْ غَيْرُ عَوْدٍ      تَمْلِكُهُ اعْوِجَاجُ وَاسْتَوَاءُ

#### TRANSLATION:

In St. Simeon's monastery I saw a cross,  
which fawns and gazelles<sup>(124)</sup> kiss.  
The clergy magnify, embrace,  
and kiss it, and weeping chokes them.  
And I said to them: Leave off! Is this other than a wooden rod  
which bending and straightening have possessed?

Zayat cites other verses in which the cross is described as a "Baal" (*ba'al*) or an "idol" (*waṭan*), the "god" (*ilāh*) which the Christians worship.<sup>(125)</sup> He also reproduces the following amusing lines attributed to Walīd b. Yazīd (caliph 743-44), who was captivated by a beautiful Christian girl going to church on a feast day:<sup>(126)</sup>

مَا زِلْتُ أَرْمَقُهَا بِعَيْنِي رَامِقٌ<sup>(1)</sup>  
حَتَّى بَصُرْتُ بِهَا تَقَبَّلَ عَوْدًا  
عَوْدَ الصَّلِيبِ فَوَيْحَ نَفْسِي مَنْ رَأَى  
مَنْكُم صَلِيبًا مِثْلَهُ مَعْبُودًا

121. ZAYAT, *Croix* (1935), 18-19.

122. *GAS* I, 56-58.

123. ZAYAT, *Croix* (1935), 18.

124. I.e., young women and men.

125. Ibid., 18-19. Cf. the verse of Ġabīr b. 'Aṭīyah cited by al-Ṭabarī, where Christians are described as those who "worshipped the cross and gave the lie to Muḥammad"; ṬABARĪ, *Tafsīr* (1955-), II, 388 (on *al-Baqarah* (2):97).

126. ZAYAT, *Croix* (1935), 18.

فسألتُ ربِّي أن أكون مكانه  
وأكون في لهب الجحيم وقوداً.

(1) Ed. وامتق.

#### TRANSLATION:

I continued to watch her with my gazing eye  
until I observed her kissing a wooden rod —  
the wood of the cross. Alas for my soul! Who of you  
has seen a cross like it worshipped?  
But then I asked my Lord that I should take its place,  
even though I become fuel for the flames of Hell.

The conceit is charming, but its underlying assumption is clear: the cross is tantamount to an idol, and its destiny is to burn in the eternal Fire.

## 2. Muslim charges of idolatrous cross worship

It is not solely in Islamic poetry that we encounter the assumption that the cross is an idol, and that Christian veneration of it is idolatry. A number of hadith reports to this effect found their way into the early compilations of hadith and Qur'ān commentary. There is, for example, the story of 'Adī b. Ḥātim, who recounts that when he approached Muḥammad with a gold cross at his neck the Prophet said, "O 'Adī, cast this idol (*waṭan*) from your neck!"<sup>(127)</sup> Descriptions of the Day of Judgement predict the damnation of Christians as worshippers of the cross, just as idolaters are damned as worshippers of idols.<sup>(128)</sup> In another hadith report preserved by Ibn Ḥanbal, Muḥammad describes himself as having been sent by God to eradicate string- and wind-instruments, idols (*al-awṭān*), crosses, and things of the time of pre-Islamic ignorance in general.<sup>(129)</sup> Such hadith reports played a role in resolving the legal question of whether compensation was due for the destruction of religiously objectionable items made of intrinsically worthless materials. In raising this issue, al-Buḥārī gives as examples "an idol (*ṣanam*), a cross, or a stringed instrument (*ṭunbūr*)."<sup>(130)</sup>

Muslim polemicists frequently charged Christians with idolatrous worship of the cross. 'Alī al-Ṭabarī in his *al-Radd 'alā l-Naṣārā* mocked his Christian readers with: "You make a wooden [cross] with your hands and hang it around your

127. ṬABARĪ, *Tafsīr* (1954–57), X, 114 (on *al-Tawbah* (9):31); TIRMIDĪ, *Sunan* (1965–68), VIII, 248 (#3094; *tafsīr Sūrat al-Tawbah* (9), 10).

128. BUḤARĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (1862–1908), IV, 463 (*tawḥīd* 24); cf. TIRMIDĪ, *Sunan* (1965–68), VII, 234 (#2560; *ṣifat al-ġannah* 20) and IBN ḤANBAL, *Musnad* (1895–96), II, 368.

129. IBN ḤANBAL, *Musnad* (1895–96), V, 268.

130. BUḤARĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (1862–1908), II, 107 (title to *Mazālim* 32).

necks!"<sup>(131)</sup> The author of the "Letter of 'Umar" wrote as follows:<sup>(132)</sup>

وأنتم تعظمون الصليب والصورة وتقبلونها وتسجدون لها؛ وهي مما  
صنع الناس بأيديهم، وليست تسمع ولا تبصر ولا تضر ولا تنفع!  
(وأعظمها عندكم ما صنع بالذهب والفضة.) وكذلك فعل قوم إبراهيم  
بصورهم وأوثانهم.

#### TRANSLATION:

You magnify the cross and the image, and kiss them and prostrate yourselves to them; but they are things that people have made with their hands, which neither hear nor see, and work neither harm nor benefit! (The greatest of them, in your view, are those made of gold or silver.) Thus were the folk of Abraham doing with their images and idols.<sup>(133)</sup>

Elsewhere "Umar" points out that the veneration of crosses and icons is an idolatrous innovation: Moses, Jesus, and the prophets "made neither cross nor image."<sup>(134)</sup> Part of Muḥammad's mission, therefore, was to forbid the worship of sun, moon, idols, cross, image, or other human beings."<sup>(135)</sup>

If 'Alī and 'Umar wrote in the second half of the ninth century, Muslim polemicists had made the charge of cross-idolatry much earlier. This is clearly seen from the fact that nearly all of the major Christian apologists included in the present survey, beginning with the catholicos Timothy, had to respond to it.

### 3. Christian responses

#### (a) *In seventh-century polemics with the Jews*

The accusation that Christians were guilty of idolatrous worship of the cross (and the icons) was by no means original to the Christian-Muslim controversy. It had, in fact, been a standard feature of the Christian-Jewish controversy which, to judge

131. تصنعون خشبة بأيديكم، ثم تعلّقونها في أعناقكم! citation preserved in the refutation of al-Ṣafī b. al-ʿAssāl, *al-Ṣaḥāʾih fī ḡawāb al-naṣāʾih*, Chapter 14 ("On Magnifying the Cross"): Vatican ar. 33, f. 147<sup>r</sup> and 38, f. 110<sup>v</sup>; MURQUS ĠIRĠAS, *Ṣaḥāʾih* (1927–28), 121/2 (where the first word is read as تَضْعُون).

132. SOURDEL, "Pamphlet" (1966), 29/12–14.

133. Cf. *Maryam* (19):41–42, *al-Šuʿarāʾ* (26):69–73. That the cross works "neither harm nor benefit," echoing *al-Šuʿarāʾ* (26):73, is a standard feature of the Muslims' accusation, appearing in the so-called "Letter of al-Hāšimī" (TARTAR, "Dialogue" (1977), 29/7) and in the dialogue of Ibrāmīn al-Ṭabarānī (MARCUSOZZO, *Dialogue* (1986), 502–3 (#512)).

134. ET of Romance text by GAUDEUL, "Correspondence" (1984), 136 (#17).

135. SOURDEL, "Pamphlet" (1966), 33/3–4.

from the literary remains at our disposal, broke out and was carried on with great vigor in seventh-century Syria, Palestine, and Egypt.<sup>(136)</sup> Practically all of these texts record the question, "Why do you Christians worship the cross (and/or icons, relics, etc.?)" often alluding to the Old Testament prohibitions and condemnations of idolatry (e.g. Exodus 20:4 = Deuteronomy 5:8, Psalm 135:15-18, Isaiah 44:14-17).

Christians developed a repertory of responses that are repeated throughout the literature, and which may be summarized as follows:<sup>(137)</sup>

(i) The cross<sup>(138)</sup> serves to awaken our memory of the one whom it represents.

(ii) Christian veneration of the cross is *not* pagan worship, but a movement of love toward the one represented by the cross. It is therefore *not* worship of the nature of the wood, as is proved by the fact that the beams of the cross, when separated, may be burnt.

(iii) Everyday custom provides many examples of veneration of an object as an expression of love, loyalty, or obedience to the person with whom it is associated: respect paid to the image or seal of the king, tears over the garment or ornament of a loved one who has died, etc.

(iv) The Old Testament as well gives many examples of veneration that is not idolatrous worship: e.g., Jacob did obeisance to the staff of Joseph (Genesis 47:31, LXX), and the children of Israel did obeisance to the Ark of the Covenant, the cherubim, and the tablets of the Law.

(v) The Old Testament contains prophecies of the cross. The cross is the "sign" (LXX: σημείωσις, σημείον, σύσσημον) alluded to in Psalm 60:4, 86:17; Isaiah 5:26; Ezekiel 9:4-6. It is the blessed wood "by which righteousness comes" of Wisdom 14:7 (LXX). Furthermore, the Old Testament is full of types of the cross: Jacob's hands crossed in blessing (Genesis 48:14), Moses' rod with which he divided the sea (Exodus 14:16, 21, 27) and brought water out of the rock (Numbers 20:11), the tree with which Moses sweetened the water of Marah (Exodus 15:23-25), Moses' outstretched hands as Israel battled Amalek (Exodus 17:8-13), and the brazen serpent in the wilderness (Numbers 21:4-9), to name a few.

(vi) Contemporary Jews venerate the Book of the Law.<sup>(139)</sup>

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136. On this controversy and its literary remains, see below, pp. 120-21. It is worth noting that the accusation of icon- and cross-idolatry *was* a new feature in this seventh-century outburst of Christian-Jewish controversy; see DÉROCHE, "Polémique" (1991), 290-92.

137. For the items listed here see: the writings of Leontius of Nicomedia (and others) as summarized in BAYNES, "Icons" (1951); "The Teaching of Jacob the Newly-Baptized," I,34 (DAGRON/DÉROCHE, "Juifs" (1991), 120-21); "The Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo" (extract in NAU, "Didascalia" (1912), 740); "Questions Addressed to Antiochus the *Dux*," Question 39 (PG 28, 621-22); "The Trophies of Damascus," VI,1-9 (BARDY, *Trophées* (1920), 245-50); and, from the eighth century, "The Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew," X,2, XII,1-13 (HAYMAN, *Disputation* (1973), 22, 29-32 [ET 23-24, 30-33]).

138. Wherever "cross" is mentioned in this summary, "icons" may be understood as well.

139. Also, Theodore Abū Qurrah may have been taking up a seventh-century argument when, at the beginning of the ninth century, he reminded Jews that they would have venerated the *eben*

(vii) The cross is responsible for miracles, terrorizes the demons, and brings sinners to repentance.

These points were all worked out by Christians a century and more before the first flowering of the Islamic *radd*-literature, and therefore Christian apologists were well prepared when Muslims asked (as the caliph al-Mahdī asked the catholicos Timothy in 781): "Why do you prostrate yourselves to the cross?"<sup>(140)</sup>

(b) *In controversy with the Muslims*

The extent to which Christian responses to Muslim accusations of cross-idolatry were a repetition or an obvious refashioning of material used in the earlier controversy with the Jews may be seen by simply working through the above list of arguments:<sup>(141)</sup>

(i) The cross is a *reminder* of the one who died upon it for humankind's salvation. "The cross represents this grace before our eyes," writes "al-Kindī," "and incites us to give thanks to the one who brings and bestows this grace."<sup>(142)</sup> The author al-*al-Ġāmī* *wuġūh al-īmān* takes another step, maintaining that the cross is the "substitute" (*halaf*) left by Christ for his followers:<sup>(143)</sup>

إِنَّ الْمَسِيحَ رَبَّنَا صُلِبَ بِبَشَرِهِ، وَبِصُلْبِهِ أَصْبْنَا الْخَيْرَ كُلَّهُ. فَلَمَّا أَنْ  
ارْتَفَعَ الْمَسِيحُ رَبَّنَا إِلَى السَّمَاءِ، وَسَمْنَا صَلِيْبَهُ<sup>(١)</sup> خَلْفًا<sup>ن</sup> مِنْهُ، إِذْ غَابَ عَنَّا.  
فَسَجَدْنَا نَحْوَهُ وَتَوَهَّمْنَا صَلْبَهُ، الَّذِي بِهِ عُثْمْنَا.

(1) MS صلى.

**TRANSLATION:**

Christ our Lord was crucified in his flesh, and through his crucifixion we obtained all good. When Christ our Lord ascended into heaven he designated for us his cross as a "substitute" for him, since he had vanished from our sight. Therefore we prostrate ourselves to it and call to our imagination his crucifixion, in which is our profit.

šētiyyah of Jerusalem (the stone upon which the Ark had rested, now enclosed by the Dome of the Rock) had they been permitted to so do; DICK, *Icônes* (1986), 177–79 (Ch. 17, #7–15).

140. كرسى كبطا علفلا صفا هـ ١٥٦, MINGANA, "Apology" (1928), 113/1/4-5.

141. What follows is constructed from Arabic Christian responses to questions by Muslims specifically about the veneration of the cross. Similar arguments are to be found in Theodore Abū Qurrah's "Chapters on Prostration to the Icons" (DICK,  *Icônes* (1986)), in which he defends the icons (although he also mentions the aniconic cross) in the light of Muslim and Jewish objections.

142. TARTAR, "Dialogue" (1977), فالصليب يمثل هذه النعمة نُصِبَ أعيننا، ويحثنا على شكر موليها والمُنعم بها 165/16-17.

143. In Chapter 18, Question #8, BL or. 4950, f. 120<sup>r</sup>/9-13. See also Chapter 24, ff. 166<sup>v</sup>-173<sup>v</sup>.

(ii) Christian veneration of the cross is therefore *not* pagan worship. "We do not worship (*lā na'budu*) the cross" is a frequently encountered expression.<sup>(144)</sup> Instead, as the catholicos Timothy explains, the cross is the *means* by which human beings show their love to God, since it was the means by which He showed his love for them.<sup>(145)</sup> Or, as the Nestorian 'Ammār al-Baṣrī writes, "by blessing ourselves with (*bi-l-tamassuḥ bi-*) the token upon which was crucified the flesh which was the veil of our Creator, we mean to magnify our Creator and to draw near to Him."<sup>(146)</sup>

The arabophone apologists display considerable ingenuity in substantiating their claim that Christian veneration of the cross is not to be compared with pagan worship. "al-Kindī" argues that Christians cannot be adoring the wood, since they also make crosses out of other materials (gold, silver, stone, jewels), or draw them, or trace its sign with the hand.<sup>(147)</sup> Abū Rā'īṭah, on the other hand, emphasizes the meanness (*ḥasāsah*) of the symbol of the cross and of the wood of which it is normally made: were Christians indeed idolaters, they would surely prostrate themselves to a more honorable symbol made of more exalted materials!<sup>(148)</sup> Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī takes it as a given that idolaters do not make public show of their divinities, and can point out, by way of contrast, that Christians display the cross "on the summit of every mountain and in every place."<sup>(149)</sup>

(iii) 'Ammār al-Baṣrī and "al-Kindī" point out that this non-idolatrous veneration of an object may be illustrated from everyday life. It is accepted custom to kiss the king's hand or feet or written decrees.<sup>(150)</sup> One may even do him honor by kissing the hoof of his mount, or the earth upon which he has trod. Furthermore, one may attempt to draw near to God by blessing oneself with the garment of a holy man.<sup>(151)</sup> In none of these cases is there any suggestion of idolatry.

(iv)-(v) If Old Testament arguments were a natural part of Christian defences

144. -- Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī: لا، لعمرى، لا نعبده! ("No, by my life, we do not worship it!"), MARCUZZO, *Dialogue* (1986), 504–5 (#518).

-- "al-Kindī": إِنَّا نَعْبُدُ الصَّلِيبَ، إِنَّمَا نَعْبُدُ الْقُوَّةَ الْحَالَّةَ فِي الصَّلِيبِ ("We Christians do not worship the cross, but the [divine] power residing in the cross"), TARTAR, "Dialogue" (1977), 167/7–8.

-- *al-Ġāmi' wuḡūh al-īmān*, Chapter 18, Question #8: فنحن نسجد للصليب سجود كرامة وتفدية [كذا]. ("We prostrate ourselves to the cross with a prostration of honor and esteem, not a prostration of worship"), BL or. 4950, f. 120<sup>v</sup>/1–2.

145. MINGANA, "Apology" (1928), 113/2/15–18, cf. PUTMAN/SAMIR, *Église* (1975), 35\* (#182).

146. فنريد بالتمسح بالشعار الذي صُلبَ البشر الذي هو حجاب خالقنا عليه تعظيم خالقنا والتقرب إليه, in *Kitāb al-burhān*, Chapter 11, HAYEK, *Apologie* (1977), 87\*/15–17.

147. TARTAR, "Dialogue" (1977), 165/18–166/1. The same argument appeared earlier (late eighth century?) in another Nestorian text, Chapter 10 of the (Syriac) *Scholion* of Theodore bar Kōnī (see SCHER, *Bar Kōnī* (1910–12), II, 270/9–17).

148. In "The Apology for the Christian Religion," GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭa* (1951), 153 (#24).

149. على رأس كل جبل وفي كل مكان, MARCUZZO, *Dialogue* (1986), 504–5 (#518).

150. So "al-Kindī," TARTAR, "Dialogue" (1977), 166/7–10.

151. See 'Ammār's *Kitāb al-burhān*, Ch. 11, HAYEK, *Apologie* (1977), 87\*/17–19.

against *Jewish* charges of idolatry, their use became somewhat more problematic in the controversy with the Muslims.<sup>(152)</sup> All the same, the catholicos Timothy cites Exodus 15:23-25 and Numbers 21:4-9 as he sings the benefits of the cross,<sup>(153)</sup> while "al-Kindī" makes use of the traditional argument concerning Israel's veneration of the Ark of the Covenant, the story of which he tells in some detail.<sup>(154)</sup> But first "al-Kindī" needs to commend the topic to his Muslim "correspondent": "We find in the books sent down (*al-kutub al-munazzalah*) from God that the prophets used to venerate the Ark which Moses made by the command of God (blessed be His name!), and prostrate themselves before it."<sup>(155)</sup> In venerating the cross, Christians are simply following the usage (*sunnah*) of God's righteous prophets (*al-anbiyā' al-abrār*).<sup>(156)</sup>

(vi) Christian apologists of the seventh century had reminded Jews that *they* venerated the book of the Law, and therefore had no cause to blame Christians for the veneration of the cross. Similarly, arabophone apologists of the ninth century remind Muslims that *they* venerate the Black Stone of the Ka'bah, which (as 'Ammār al-Baṣrī points out) the *pagans* had honored and kissed.<sup>(157)</sup> The Christians could then indulge in Cross/Stone comparisons. 'Ammār comments that it makes better sense to venerate wood than stone, as wood is inherently more "fruitful."<sup>(158)</sup> Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī, while not contesting his interlocutor's claim that the Black Stone has powers of healing for those who go to Mecca, points out that the miracle-working powers of the cross are *universal*, not local. There is no need to go to Constantinople in order to invoke the power of the cross!<sup>(159)</sup>

The author of *al-Ġāmi' wuḡūh al-īmān* also mentions the Muslim practice of kissing the Stone,<sup>(160)</sup> but goes on to speak of Islamic prayer in general: for its practice and orientation, it makes use of *a building* built by human beings. He mocks any stubborn refusal to admit the appropriateness of bowing toward man-made

152. For a detailed discussion of the use of the Old Testament in the Arabic apologies for the crucifixion of Christ, see below, pp. 119-28.

153. MINGANA, "Apology" (1928), 113/1/4-2/18, cf. PUTMAN/SAMIR, *Église* (1975), 34\* (#179). The Arabic recension in 27 questions adds mention of Moses' rod (Exodus 14:16; Numbers 20:11) and the flowering rod of Aaron (Number 17:8); CASPAR, "Versions" (1977), 140-41 (#29).

154. TARTAR, "Dialogue" (1977), 166/11-22. Similarly, see the Latin "Letter of Leo" (which may derive from a ninth or tenth century Arabic original; PG 107, 320C). Going back to the eighth century, we find this argument in Chapter 10 of the (Syriac) *Scholion* of Theodore bar Kōnī (SCHER, *Bar Kōnī* (1910-12), II, 268/15-270/4).

155. وإِنَّا نَجِدُ فِي الْكُتُبِ الْمَنْزُورَةِ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ أَنَّ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ كَانُوا يَعْظُمُونَ التَّابُوتَ الَّذِي عَمِلَهُ مُوسَى بِأَمْرِ اللَّهِ وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُهُ!، *ibid.*, lines 11-12.

156. *Ibid.*, lines 21-22.

157. The same point is made in the Latin "Letter of Leo," PG 107, 320D.

158. *Kitāb al-burhān*, Ch. 11, HAYEK, *Apologie* (1977), 87\*/10-12.

159. MARCUZZO, *Dialogue* (1986), 506-11 (#523-29).

160. Chapter 18, Question #8; BL or. 4950, f. 120<sup>r</sup>/15-17.

objects in the worship of God by asking: if prayer is directed to God, and God is in heaven, why do Muslims not then pray on *top* of their mosques?<sup>(161)</sup>

(vii) Arabic apologetic works which took the form of debates with Muslims often insisted upon the miracle-working powers of the cross. "al-Kindī," for example, reminds his "correspondent" of the way in which he, a Muslim, had invoked the cross for his safety during a series of adventures.<sup>(162)</sup> And the power of the cross lies at the heart of the defence of its cult in the Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī debate:<sup>(163)</sup>

لا ينبغي لأحد أن يلوم النصارى على حبهم للصليب، لأنه قد ظهر  
لهم منه أمور لا تُعدّ ولا تُحصى. وذلك أنه علّم اليمين، وراية النصر  
والخلاص من الضلالة.  
ولو شاء النصرانيّ المؤمن بالمسيح وبرسم الصليب أن يشرب سمّ  
الموت، ويطرّد الشياطين قهراً، ويدخل النار عياناً، باسم المسيح وبرسم  
الصليب، لفعل.

#### TRANSLATION:

No one should blame the Christians for their love for the cross, because from it innumerable and incalculable things have been made manifest to them. That is because it is the token of strength and the flag of victory and salvation from error.

And if a Christian who believes in Christ and in the sign of the cross wished to drink mortal poison, or to exorcise demons by force, or to enter fire publicly, in the name of Christ and by the sign of the cross he would do so.

The second paragraph, of course, serves to set up the trial by ordeal by which, according to the narrative, the monk Ibrāhīm is vindicated.

We recall that the *beta*-recension of this passage and some recensions of the "Abū Qurrah" debate allude to the power of the cross to grant *military* victory.<sup>(164)</sup> More typical of the ninth century, however, is the *alpha*-recension's description of the cross as "the flag of victory *and salvation from error*," or the statement of the author of *al-Ġāmi'* that Christians prostrate themselves to the cross because of the victory won through it by Christ *over Satan*, who flees from it.<sup>(165)</sup> These examples remind us that there is no sharp dividing line to be drawn between the Christian apologists' defences of the cult of the cross and their arguments for the historicity and salvific efficacy of the crucifixion, matters which shall occupy us in later chapters.

161. Ibid., f. 120<sup>v</sup>/10–17.

162. TARTAR, "Dialogue" (1977), 166/23–167/5 [FT idem, *Dialogue* (1985), 240–41].

163. MARCUZZO, *Dialogue* (1986), 504–7 (# 519–21).

164. See above, p. 83.

165. Text and translation below, pp. 161–62.

#### 4. A concluding comment

In addition to seeing in the cross a symbol of the Byzantine empire and its ideology of divinely-granted invincibility, Muslims saw the cross as the object of what they could only judge to be an idolatrous cult. They considered this cult repugnant and reprehensible, and routinely made objections to it.

I use the word "routinely" advisedly here. To judge from the materials that have come down to us, the debate over Christian veneration of the cross is repetitive and lacks vitality. The charge of the Muslim controversialists is constant, while the responses of the Christian apologists cover precisely the same ground as their predecessors' responses to Jews a century and a half previously. For a more vital debate, it is necessary to look beyond the accusations and denials of cross-idolatry to the *beliefs* proclaimed and sustained by the symbol venerated by Christians.

#### C. "You Shall Not Announce Your *širk*!"

During the course of this century there has been a considerable amount of interest in early Islam's attitude to pictorial representation, in particular the evidence for an Islamic iconoclasm, driven in large part by the desire of students of Christian history and art to explain the causes of *Byzantine* iconoclasm. Did Islamic ideology number among these causes? The victorious iconophile Byzantines did indeed point to the Muslims as the inspiration of Byzantine iconoclasm,<sup>(166)</sup> but the near-consensus of contemporary scholars is that the charge cannot be sustained. Byzantine iconoclasm had its own Byzantine roots, but once it had been overthrown the victorious iconophiles found it convenient to "scapegoat" the Muslims, in particular the caliph Yazīd b. 'Abd al-Malik.<sup>(167)</sup>

The dossier on Islam and iconoclasm has recently been reviewed by G.R.D. King in an article with the felicitous title "Islam, Iconoclasm, and the Declaration of Doctrine."<sup>(168)</sup> King upholds the current consensus, arguing that the evidence at our disposal indicates that far more disturbing to Muslims than the specifically *representational* character of Christian icons was the *doctrinal content* of those icons, as well as that of aniconic crosses and inscriptions. What moved Muslims to hostility against icons (including icons of the crucifixion) and crosses was not so much an ideology forbidding pictorial representation as the fact that these icons and crosses *declared doctrines* which Muslims found objectionable.

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166. For a recent discussion of the relevant Greek (and Syriac) texts see GRIFFITH, "Bashīr" (1990), 294–98.

167. See the articles mentioned in the next note. A notable dissent from the scholarly consensus is that of CRONE, "Iconoclasm" (1980).

168. KING, "Islam" (1985). His first note gives an extensive bibliography, to which should now be added GRIFFITH, "Tract" (1985) and idem, "Bashīr" (1990).

This is easily illustrated with respect to the cross. Earlier we took notice of the edict of the "emir" "Amrû" b. Sa'd (probably 'Umayr b. Sa'd al-Anṣarī, Muslim governor of Ḥimṣ) forbidding the public display of the cross.<sup>(169)</sup> The Syriac chronicles that report this edict go on to describe his encounter with the Syrian Orthodox patriarch John ("of the *sedras*"), at the conclusion of which the governor ordered: "Translate your Gospel for me into the language of the Saracens (that is, Arabic). Only, you will not make any mention of Christ as God, or of baptism, or of the cross."<sup>(170)</sup> Clearly, what 'Umayr found offensive about the cross was its specific doctrinal content. For this pious Muslim (who was known as *al-Zāhid*, "the ascetic"), the cross was objectionable in the same way as were the mention of the divinity of Christ or of baptism.

About half a century later, as we have already noted, the "Islamizing" caliph 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān replaced crosses on gold pieces with citations from *Sūrat al-Ihlāṣ* (112) -- which could well be considered as the replacement of a declaration of *Christian* belief about Jesus with the *Islamic* counter-declaration: "God . . . has not begotten and has not been begotten." Alongside of this we may place a report concerning 'Abd al-Malik's brother 'Abd al-'Azīz, governor of Egypt. According to Life 41 (Isaac, patriarch 686-89) of "The History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria,"<sup>(171)</sup> 'Abd al-'Azīz acted as follows:<sup>(172)</sup>

At that time he commanded that all the crosses in the district of Egypt be destroyed, even the crosses of gold and silver, and thus the Christians of the land of Egypt were disturbed. Then he wrote a number of notices and placed them on the doors of the churches of Miṣr and lower Egypt, saying in them: "Muḥammad is the great apostle of God, and Jesus also is an apostle of God. Verily God 'has not begotten and has not been begotten.'"

Again, a hostility to crosses is coupled with concern to declare the Islamic "christology," summed up especially in *Sūrat al-Ihlāṣ*.<sup>(173)</sup>

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169. Above, p. 67.

170. From the "Chronicle" of Michael the Syrian, CHABOT, *Michel* (1899-1910), IV, 422 [FT II, 432]. A nearly identical text is found in "The Chronicle to the Year 1234," idem, *1234* (1917-1920), I, 263 [LT I, 205-6]. Both histories are here dependent on the ninth-century "Ecclesiastical History" of Dionysius.

171. The source for this part of the Arabic "History" is a Coptic history written by George the archdeacon, who was secretary to Simon I (patriarch 689-701).

172. My translation of the Arabic text in EVETTS, *History* (1907-15), V, 25.

173. It is worth mentioning that *Sūrat al-Ihlāṣ* also figures prominently in the inscriptions of 'Abd al-Malik's great architectural statement of Islam's triumph and final fulfillment of all previous revelation, the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. See O. GRABAR, "Dome" (1959).

A final example of Islamic objections to the cross as a declarer of objectionable doctrine will bring this chapter to its close. It is taken not from Christian historiography, but from Islamic law. The *Kitāb al-Umm* of the *imām* al-Šāfi'ī preserves what might be considered a "textbook treaty" for use in treating with Christians and Jews in conquered towns. One set of conditions to which Christians are to agree runs as follows:<sup>(174)</sup>

. . . أن ليس لكم أن تظهروا في شيء من أمصار المسلمين الصليب،  
ولا تعلنوا بالشرك؛  
ولا تبنوا كنيسة، ولا موضع مجتمع لصلاتكم،  
ولا تضربوا بناقوس؛  
ولا تظهروا قولكم بالشرك في عيسى بن مريم، ولا في غيره،  
لأحد من المسلمين.

#### TRANSLATION:

You shall not display (*tuzhirū*) the cross in any of the Muslims' towns,  
nor proclaim your association of others with God (*širk*).  
You shall not build a church or gathering place for your prayer,  
nor beat the *nāqūs*.  
You shall not announce (*tuzhirū*) to any of the Muslims  
your association (*širk*) of Jesus the son of Mary, or of others, with God.

As the parallelisms in this passage make plain, what is objectionable in the Christians' public display of the cross is its role in proclaiming doctrines about Jesus that the Muslims can only see as *širk*, the reprehensible association of a creature with the Creator.<sup>(175)</sup> The cross might be the communal symbol of a somewhat nervously regarded subject population; it might be the token of Byzantine victory; it might be suspected of being tantamount to an idol. What is regarded as particularly objectionable in this text of al-Šāfi'ī, however, is *the cross as a declaration of Christian teaching about Jesus*, teaching that we might summarize thus: Jesus was crucified; his crucifixion was for the salvation of humankind; he is to be confessed as Lord and God. The following chapters will take up each of these points in turn, in order to examine the ways in which they were approached by Christian and Muslim controversialists during the first years of their encounter in Arabic.

174. ŠĀFI'Ī, *Umm* (1973), IV, 197–99 (here 198).

175. Cf. *Luqmān* (31):13: إِنَّ الشَّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ ("to associate others with God is a mighty wrong").



## Chapter Three

### THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS/ĪSĀ B. MARYAM

#### Introduction

The Qur'ānic passage *al-Nisā'* (4):153-61 is a polemic against the Jews, rebuked for their offences of deed (breaking the covenant, disbelieving God's signs, and killing the prophets wrongfully) and speech (saying that their hearts were hardened, speaking a great calumny against Mary, *and claiming to have crucified Christ*). The Qur'ān's presentation of and response to this last claim is as follows:

... (١٥٧) وقولهم، «إنا قتلنا المسيح، عيسى ابن مريم، رسول الله!» وما قتلوه وما صلبوه، ولكن شبه لهم. وإن الذين اختلفوا فيه لفي شك منه، ما لهم به من علم إلا اتباع الظن؛ وما قتلوه يقيناً، (١٥٨) بل رفعه الله إليه. وكان الله عزيزاً حكيماً. (١٥٩) وإن من اهل الكتاب إلا ليؤمنن به قبل موته، ويوم القيامة يكون عليهم شهيداً.

#### TRANSLATION:<sup>(1)</sup>

... (157) and their saying, 'We slew the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of God' — yet they did not slay him, neither crucified him, only a likeness of that was shown to them. Those who are at variance concerning him surely are in doubt regarding him; they have no knowledge of him, except the following of surmise; and they slew him not of a certainty — no indeed; (158) God raised him up to Him; God is All-mighty, All-wise. (159) There is not one of the People of the Book but will assuredly believe in him before his death, and on the Resurrection Day he will be a witness against them.

On the face of it, the passage simply denies the death of Jesus on the cross: "they did not slay him, neither crucified him." The death of Christ on the cross, which Theodore Abū Qurrah described as the hermeneutical key to the whole of Christian scripture,<sup>(2)</sup> *simply did not happen*. On the face of it then, the passage

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1. From ARBERRY, *Koran* (1964), 95. All English Qur'ān translations in this study are taken or adapted from Arberry's.
  2. In "On the Necessity of Redemption," BACHA, *Mayāmir* (1905), 89/15-17: فإن أنت سمعت من كتب الله العتيقة والحديثة «مغفرة» أو «رحمة» أو «توبة»، فاعلم ذلك أنه لا يكون إلا بصليب المسيح وسفك دمه، ولو الله العتيقة والحديثة «مغفرة» أو «رحمة» أو «توبة» لا هذا لكان الناموس باطلاً والله عيشاً 'forgiveness' or 'mercy' or 'repentance,' know that none of that exists except through the cross of Christ and the shedding of his blood, for otherwise the Law would be void, and God a joke").

places a question-mark against the entire Christian understanding of the ways of God with human beings. The question-mark has been upheld by the great mass of Islamic tradition: the classical Islamic commentaries are practically unanimous in understanding the passage as a denial of the crucifixion of Jesus, and concentrate instead on the question of what or who was crucified in his place.<sup>(3)</sup>

There can be no wonder that, throughout the past fourteen centuries, Christians living in contact with Muslims have attempted to deal with this passage in one fashion or another, whether by outright rejection or by seeking possibilities for interpretation deeper than "the face of it." The patterns for many of these attempts were set in the Arabic-language discussions of the eighth and ninth centuries. In the present chapter, I begin with a presentation of the Islamic background to these discussions. This is followed by an examination of the ways in which the early arabophone Christian apologists strove to defend the historicity of the death of Jesus upon the cross. Finally, by considering one frequently-raised Islamic objection to Christian belief in the crucifixion, I hope to penetrate the Islamic logic from within which the denial of Jesus' crucifixion is fitting and, indeed, inevitable.

### I. *al-Nisā'* (4):157 and its Earliest Interpretation

Before turning to Christian-Muslim discussion of the crucifixion of Jesus/ʿĪsā b. Maryam, it is worth our while to consider the Islamic background to the controversy. What did the first generations of Muslims believe concerning the end or climax of the past career of *al-Masīḥ*, and how did these beliefs develop? As is the case with all questions concerning Islamic dogma in the first Islamic century and a half, the sources at our disposal must be used with great caution. I do not, however, share the extreme scepticism towards the Islamic sources for the early period which is perhaps best exemplified by Patricia Crone's and Michael Cook's *Hagarism*,<sup>(4)</sup> an attempt to reconstruct the history of Islam's earliest development exclusively from *non-Islamic* sources. But if the Islamic sources for early Islamic ideological history are not to be ignored, the project of Crone and Cook has served to draw attention to the help non-Islamic sources may possibly give in the reconstruction of that history. In what follows, an attempt will be made to sketch the development of the interpretation of *al-Nisā'* (4):157 by taking Christian as well as Islamic sources into account.

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3. See ROBINSON, *Christ* (1991), 127–41.

4. CRONE/COOK, *Hagarism* (1977). For one critique of this book (among many) see WATT, "Reliability" (1983).

My own approach to the Islamic sources is influenced by work such as that of Fuat Sezgin on the transmission of early *ḥadīṭ* and *tafsīr* (GAS I), of R.G. Khoury on the early *qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* literature (e.g. R.G. KHOURY, *Wahb* (1972)), or of W. Madelung on early Islamic apocalyptic (e.g. MADELUNG, "Apocalyptic" (1976) and "Sufyānī" (1976)).

## A. Does *al-Nisā'* (4):157 Deny the Death of Jesus on the Cross?

### 1. Problems of interpretation

Muslim and Christian discussions of *al-Nisā'* (4):157 have revealed that, far from being perfectly straightforward, the verse contains a number of exegetical difficulties. Its *ما قتلوه وما صلبوه*, ("they [the Jews] did not slay him, neither crucified him") would seem to be a clear denial of the crucifixion. But, as one contemporary Muslim scholar asks, "Does this verse mean that Jesus was killed and crucified, but at the hands of someone other than the Jews, or that he was not killed or crucified at all?"<sup>(5)</sup> The words that follow in the Qur'ānic text have been variously interpreted by Christian and Muslim scholars alike: *ولكن شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ*. Is this to be interpreted "but he was made to appear like [him] in their eyes," where the *nā'ib al-fā'il*<sup>(6)</sup> is a person (either Jesus or someone else) and *šubbiha* is understood in the sense of receiving a *šibh* or *šabah*, an "appearance" or "resemblance"?<sup>(7)</sup> Or is it to be interpreted "but it was made dubious, problematic to them," where the *nā'ib al-fā'il* is the event as a whole, and *šubbiha* is understood in the sense of becoming the object of *šubhah*, "uncertainty" or "doubt"?<sup>(8)</sup>

The matter becomes all the more problematic when other Qur'ānic verses are taken into account. Even if *al-Nisā'* (4):157 is understood to be a clear denial of the crucifixion of Jesus, *Āl 'Imrān* (3):55, *al-Mā'idah* (5):117, and *Maryam* (19):33 all seem to speak clearly of Jesus' death. The first of these -- which we shall encounter frequently as this chapter unfolds -- reads in part: *إِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ، يَا عِيسَى، إِنِّي مُتَوَفِّيكَ، وَرَافِعُكَ إِلَيَّ وَمُطَهِّرُكَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا . . .* «. . . When God said, 'Jesus, I will cause thee to die and will raise thee to me, and I will purify thee of those who believe not . . .」

These questions of interpretation lead to the questions, posed most insistently by Christian interpreters: Does the Qur'ān *really* deny the death of Jesus on the cross? How did *Muḥammad* understand the death of Jesus? As Räsänen comments, "That is undoubtedly the single most difficult problem of the Qur'ānic 'christology'."<sup>(9)</sup>

### 2. Two Western Christian assessments

The problems involved in dealing with these Qur'ānic data may be indicated by examining the work of two contemporary Western Christian scholars, one who

5. CHARFI, *Radd* (1986), 119.

6. That is, the grammatical subject of a verb in the passive voice.

7. Cf. the sense of *تشابه*, "to appear (mutually) similar," in *al-Baqarah* (2):70.

8. Cf. the sense of *متشابهات*, "unclear, ambiguous," in *Āl 'Imrān* (3):7. On all this, see RÄISÄNEN, *Jesusbild* (1971), 65.

9. Ibid.

concludes that *al-Nisā'* (4):157 does deny the historicity of the crucifixion of Christ, and the other that it does not.<sup>(10)</sup>

(a) *Räisänen: al-Nisā' (4):157 denies Christ's death by crucifixion*

In his book *Das koranische Jesusbild*, the New Testament scholar Heikki Räisänen turns his exegetical skills to an analysis of *al-Nisā'* (4):157 in its Qur'anic context.<sup>(11)</sup> He argues persuasively that *al-Nisā'* (4):157 does indeed deny the death of Jesus on the cross; the Jews had intended to crucify him, but God foiled their plans. Räisänen finds Qur'anic support for this interpretation in *al-Mā'idah* (5):110, *وَإِذْ كَفَفْتُ* *بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ* عَنْكَ ("when I restrained from thee [Jesus] the children of Israel") and *Āl 'Imrān* (3):54, *وَمَكَرُوا وَمَكَرَ اللَّهُ، وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الْمَاكِرِينَ* ("And they [the Jews] devised [against Jesus] and God devised [against them], and God is the best of devisers").<sup>(12)</sup> But what then of *Āl 'Imrān* (3):55, *al-Mā'idah* (5):117, and *Maryam* (19):33? Räisänen does not hesitate to conclude that the Qur'ān *also* affirms Jesus' past death. He finds additional support for this conclusion in *al-Mā'idah* (5):75, *مَا الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ، قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ* ("The Messiah, son of Mary, is nothing but an apostle; apostles passed away before him"), which is to be interpreted in parallel with *Āl 'Imrān* (3):144-45 (where the same is said of Muḥammad).<sup>(13)</sup> "According to Muḥammad, therefore, Jesus had to die, though not, to be sure, on the cross . . . . How, concretely, he imagined the course of events surrounding the crucifixion [is a question that] must remain open."<sup>(14)</sup> Räisänen's conclusions are carefully-argued but disconcerting, only halfway in agreement with mainstream Islamic tradition (for which Christ's death is still in the future) while giving no comfort to Christians seeking a way to overcome the stumbling-block of the crucifixion in Christian-Muslim discussion.

(b) *Jourdan: al-Nisā' (4):157 does not deny Christ's death by crucifixion*

If Räisänen concurs with mainstream Islamic tradition in affirming that *al-Nisā'* (4):157 denies the death of Jesus on the cross, François Jourdan, in his recent doctoral dissertation "La mort du Messie en Croix," repeatedly asserts that the verse

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10. I have chosen to present these illustrative examples rather than to give a survey of modern positions on *al-Nisā'* (4):157, which would take far too much space. There is today a vast literature on Christ in the Qur'ān. WISMER, *Jesus* (1977) is an annotated bibliography of English and French works appearing up to 1976. This may be supplemented by the bibliographies appearing periodically in *The Muslim World*.

11. RÄISÄNEN, *Jesusbild* (1971), 65–76.

12. *Ibid.*, 71.

13. *Ibid.*, 71–73.

14. *Ibid.*, 73. Räisänen's views were broadly anticipated many years earlier by GEROCK, *Christologie* (1839), 56–64.

does no such thing.<sup>(15)</sup> Jourdan examines much the same Qur'ānic evidence that Räsänen considers, but divides it between two sections of his study, one a discussion of the intent of the *Qur'ān* in *al-Nisā'* (4):157,<sup>(16)</sup> and the other a response to the question "Why has the *Islamic majority tradition* refused the historical fact of the death of the Messiah on the cross?"<sup>(17)</sup> (i) In his examination of the intent of the *Qur'ān*, Jourdan reads the passage from *Sūrat al-Nisā'* against the background of *Āl 'Imrān* (3):55, *al-Mā'idah* (5):117, and *Maryam* (19):33, and adds *Āl 'Imrān* (3):169, لَا تُحْسِبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا بَلْ أحيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يَرْزُقُونَ ("Count not those who were killed in God's way as dead, but rather living with their Lord, by Him provided"). His conclusion is that the *Qur'ān* does *not* intend to deny the fact of Christ's death by crucifixion, but rather to rebuke "the Jewish pretension of being in control of the world's religious events."<sup>(18)</sup> (ii) In his attempt to explain the refusal of the crucifixion by the "Islamic majority tradition," Jourdan develops arguments that derive not so much from extra-Qur'ānic tradition as from the *Qur'ān* itself: that God saves His apostles; that God is "the best of devisers," ready to resort to ruse in order to achieve His victory; that God's victory must be manifest on earth and in time.<sup>(19)</sup>

In accordance with the tendencies of the Massignon-influenced Islam-apostolate in which he stands,<sup>(20)</sup> Jourdan holds that *al-Nisā'* (4):157 does not deny the death of Christ by crucifixion. He pays a price for this, however, in that he must – artificially in my view -- sort his Qur'ānic data between the *Qur'ān's own* view on the one hand, and that of the Islamic majority tradition on the other. In effect, if unintentionally, Jourdan's discussion of the latter shows that the *Qur'ān's own* apprehension of God and His dealings with the world permit the reading of *al-Nisā'* (4):157 as a *denial* of the crucifixion. Jourdan himself comes close to realizing this when he comments, "It may also be that Muḥammad [toward the end of his life] had a presentiment of something he had not perceived at the beginning of his mission: that the crucifixion of 'Īsā could not be squared with his own theological principles."<sup>(21)</sup> But he hastens to add: "[W]e do not think that he went so far as to formulate it explicitly."<sup>(22)</sup>

15. JOURDAN, "Mort" (1988), 273, 299–300, 315–16, 380.

16. *Ibid.*, 259–73.

17. *Ibid.*, 382–90. Emphasis mine.

18. *Ibid.*, 271. Jourdan is clearly right in his emphasis that the basic intent of *al-Nisā'* (4):157 is the deflation of the Jews' *hubris*. But the question remains: *how*, according to the *Qur'ān*, did God accomplish this deflation?

19. *Ibid.*, 384–90. Jourdan's discussion of the Qur'ānic witness to God's saving His apostles would be clearer had he noted the Qur'ānic distinction between "apostle" and "prophet." See below, pp. 147–50.

20. For the views of Massignon, see below, pp. 108–9. Members of his "circle" include Giulio Basetti-Sani, Denise Masson, and Youakim Moubarac (who directed Jourdan's dissertation). Basetti-Sani is well known for arguing that the *Qur'ān* does not in fact deny the crucifixion of Christ; see his recently published book, Basetti-Sani, *Vangelo* (1991), 103–22.

21. JOURDAN, "Mort" (1988), 274.

22. *Ibid.*

### 3. An anticipated conclusion

Does *al-Nisā'* (4):157 deny the death of Christ by crucifixion? The material of the remainder of this chapter is relevant to a response, but it will be clear from the tenor of the foregoing paragraphs that I incline to think that it does. Räsänen's arguments for understanding *al-Nisā'* (4):157 as denying the crucifixion are persuasive, and his suggestion that the Qur'ān might affirm the fact of Christ's past death while at the same time denying his death *by crucifixion* is an important contribution to the discussion. Jourdan, on the other hand, saddles himself with an artificial distinction in his attempt to maintain that *al-Nisā'* (4):157 does not deny the crucifixion. As we have seen, he comes very close to demonstrating the opposite of what he intends.

### B. The Earliest Commentary on *al-Nisā'* (4):157

The Qur'ān commentary of Abū Ġāfar al-Ṭabarī contains a rich selection of comment on the phrase *وما قتلوه وما صلبوه ولكن شبه لهم* of *al-Nisā'* (4):157.<sup>(23)</sup> The *isnāds* (chains of transmitters) with which he documents his sources<sup>(24)</sup> reveal that he has preserved material from the written commentaries of -- or the exegetical traditions associated with<sup>(25)</sup>-- Muğāhid b. Ġabr (d. 722),<sup>(26)</sup> al-Qāsim b. Abī Bazzah (d. ca. 733),<sup>(27)</sup> Qatādah b. Dī'āmah (d. 736),<sup>(28)</sup> Ismā'īl b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Suddī (d. 745),<sup>(29)</sup> 'Abd al-Malik b. 'Abd al-'Azīz Ibn Ġurayġ (d. 767),<sup>(30)</sup> as well as from the prophetic histories of Wahb b. Munabbih (d. 728 or 732)<sup>(31)</sup> and the universal history of Muḥammad Ibn Ishāq (d. ca. 767).<sup>(32)</sup> The present section is a brief attempt to sort out this material along a logical and (to a certain extent) temporal trajectory, in order

23. ṬABARĪ, *Tafsīr* (1955--), IX, 367–76.

24. For a study of the *isnāds* in al-Ṭabarī's Qur'ān commentary, see HORST, "Überlieferung" (1953).

25. Fuat Sezgin's belief that Ibn 'Abbās, Muğāhid, Qatādah, etc. were all authors of written works of *tafsīr* (GAS I, 25–35) is to be modified in the light of the researches of G. Stauth and F. Leemhuis; see LEEMHUIS, "MS. 1075" (1981) and "Origins" (1988), where references to Stauth's unpublished dissertation may be found. Their studies of the exegetical traditions claiming the authority of Muğāhid suggest that these and other ancient traditions of *tafsīr* were not fixed in writing until the mid-eighth century A.D. by scholars such as Šibl b. 'Ubād (d. 766), 'Isā b. Maymūn (d. ca. 786), Ma'mar b. Rašīd (d. 770 or 771), and 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Ġurayġ (d. 767), to mention a few names found in the *isnāds* in question.

26. GAS I, 29.

27. IBN HAĠAR, *Tahdīb* (1907–10), VIII, 310 (#560).

28. GAS I, 31–32.

29. Ibid., 32–33.

30. Ibid., 91.

31. Ibid., 305–7; R.G. KHOURY, *Wahb* (1972).

32. GAS I, 288–90. The first part of Ibn Ishāq's history, the *Kitāb al-mubtada'* (which deals with the stories of the prophets), has been reconstructed in English translation: NEWBY, *Prophet* (1989).

to show that there is indeed a *history* of interpretation of *al-Nisā'* (4):157, and that interpretations which later generations took to be "standard" were a considerable time in the developing.

## 1. A trajectory of interpretation

The exegetical reports recorded in al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* are unanimous in denying the death of Jesus on the cross and in asserting that something or someone *else* was in fact crucified. But with regard to what or who *was* crucified, the reports fall along a logical and roughly chronological trajectory, from early "agnosticism" to "substitutionist" theories marked by ever-increasing detail and specificity.<sup>(33)</sup>

(a) In the well-known narrative of Christ's passion by Wahb b. Munabbih, as transmitted by his nephew 'Abd al-Ṣamad b. Ma'qil,<sup>(34)</sup> it is not even clear that that which was crucified in Christ's place was a person; the report has Christ refer to it as a *ṣay'* ("thing"). Because of its importance, we shall return to this narrative in a moment.

(b) A bit further along the trajectory of interpretation, reports from the exegetical traditions associated with Muḡāhid state that *šubbiha lahum* means "they crucified a *man* other than Jesus, considering him [the man] to be him [Jesus]."<sup>(35)</sup> But the reports give no information at all as to the identity of the man.

(c) Yet further along the trajectory, we have a number of reports which specify that the one crucified was a *disciple* who responded to Jesus' request for a volunteer to die in his place. The sparest of these reports are traced back to the authority of Qatādah,<sup>(36)</sup> of Muḡāhid's student al-Qāsim b. Abī Bazzah,<sup>(37)</sup> and of Ibn Ġurayġ.<sup>(38)</sup> Somewhat fuller narratives are attributed to Wahb b. Munabbih<sup>(39)</sup> or to al-Suddī.<sup>(40)</sup>

33. For earlier analyses of the development of the material as well as the "substitutionist" terminology used here, see AYOUB, "Christologie" (1980), 96–103, and note the comments of ROBINSON, *Christ* (1991), 140–41.

34. The Arabic text is given below (pp. 295–96) as Appendix I to the dissertation. It is reproduced from ṬABARĪ, *Tafsīr* (1955–), IX, 368–70 (#10780). The *isnād* is al-Muṭannā / Ishāq / Ismā'il b. 'Abd al-Karīm / 'Abd al-Ṣamad b. Ma'qil / Wahb. 'Abd al-Ṣamad was considered a trustworthy transmitter of Wahb's works; see R.G. KHOURY, *Wahb* (1972), 183.

35. ṬABARĪ, *Tafsīr* (1955–), IX, 373–74 (#10787–89). The *isnāds* are those listed by HORST, "Überlieferung" (1953) as #7a, 8 and 5 respectively.

36. ṬABARĪ, *Tafsīr* (1955–), IX, 370 (#10781–82), with the *isnāds* listed by HORST, "Überlieferung" (1953) as #14 and 12 respectively.

37. ṬABARĪ, *Tafsīr* (1955–), IX, 371 (#10784), with a typically "Muḡāhidan" *isnād*: HORST, "Überlieferung" (1953), #8, with al-Qāsim in place of Muḡāhid.

38. ṬABARĪ, *Tafsīr* (1955–), IX, 373 (#10786), with the *isnād* listed by HORST, "Überlieferung" (1953) as #5.

39. ṬABARĪ, *Tafsīr* (1955–), IX, 368 (#10779), with the *isnād* Ibn Ḥumayd / Ya'qūb al-Qummī / Hārūn b. 'Antarah / Wahb.

In none of these reports, however, is any further information about the identity of the volunteer given.

(d) Further along the trajectory still, some description of the volunteering disciple is given. In a hadith report dubiously attributed to 'Abd Allāh Ibn 'Abbās, the volunteer is "a youth among the youngest of them in age."<sup>(41)</sup> And finally, Ibn Ishāq provides the volunteer a name: Sergius.<sup>(42)</sup>

(e) At the end of the trajectory, "punishment substitutionist" theories appear. These hold that someone deserving of punishment – Judas Iscariot perhaps,<sup>(43)</sup> or the man sent into the house to arrest Jesus ("Ṭīṭāyūs" in al-Rāzī<sup>(44)</sup> or "Ṭīṭānūs" in al-Bayḍāwī<sup>(45)</sup> – was the one crucified.<sup>(46)</sup>

## 2. The interpretation of Wahn<sup>(47)</sup>

It may be worthwhile to pause and examine the narrative which stands at the beginning of the trajectory just described, transmitted from Wahn b. Munabbih (d. 728 or 732), the great authority on the traditions of the Jews and the Christians.<sup>(48)</sup> Even though Ibn Kaṭīr would later characterize the report as "a very strange sequence [of events],"<sup>(49)</sup> al-Ṭabarī regarded it highly, in his commentary stating his preference for

40. Ibid., IX, 371 (#10783), with the *isnād* listed by HORST, "Überlieferung" (1953) as #15.

41. شَابٌّ مِنْ أَجْدَثِهِمْ سَنًا, ṬABARĪ, *Tafsīr* (1954–57), XXVIII, 92 (on *al-Ġum'ah* (61):14). The *isnād* is: Abū Mu'āwiya / al-A'maš / al-Minhāl / Sa'īd b. Ġubayr / Ibn 'Abbās.

42. ṬABARĪ, *Tafsīr* (1955–), IX, 372–73 (#10785), with the *isnād* listed by HORST, "Überlieferung" (1953) as #17.

43. See ṬABARĪ, *Tafsīr* (1955–), IX, 373 (#10785, end), where this is mentioned as the view of "some of the Christians." See also note 57 below. That it was Judas who was crucified is claim of *The Gospel of Barnabas*; see KHOSROSHAHĪ, *Barnabas* (1986), 263–68.

44. RĀZĪ, *Tafsīr* (1933–?), XI, 100.

45. BAYDĀWĪ, *Anwār* (1925), 104.

46. In "The Debate of the Patriarch John" (*GCAL* I, 478–80), an Egyptian Christian work of popular apologetics of uncertain date, the Muslim governor 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Marwān is made to say that it was a *thief* in the form of Jesus who was crucified; Paris ar. 215, f. 202<sup>r</sup>. For the Coptic original, see EVELYN WHITE, *Monasteries* (1926), 171–75; the paleographical evidence points to a tenth-century date for the manuscript leaves he reassembles.

47. The Arabic text of the hadith report to be discussed here is reproduced below, pp. 295–96. It has been translated many times, including: ELDER, "Crucifixion" (1923), 247–251 [ET]; FERRÉ, "Vie" (1979), 22–23 [FT]; AYOUB, "Christology" (1980), 118–20 [annotated ET]; RIZZARDI, *Fascino* (1989), 200–2 [IT]; ROBINSON, *Christ* (1991), 127–29 [ET].

48. On Wahn, see especially R.G. KHOURY, *Wahn* (1972) and "Citations" (1977).

49. سِيَاقٌ غَرِيبٌ جَدًّا, IBN KAṬĪR, *Tafsīr* (1970–83), II, 431.

it over other reports concerning Jesus' escape from death,<sup>(50)</sup> and in his history reproducing it to the exclusion of other reports.<sup>(51)</sup>

In Wahb's recital of the end of Christ's ministry, the gospel narratives are closely followed: we read of Christ's fear of death, the Last Supper, the foot washing, Jesus' prayer and the inability of the disciples to keep vigil, Simon [Peter]'s denials, and the betrayal by one of the disciples for thirty pieces of silver.<sup>(52)</sup> At this point in the narrative we encounter the obscure phrase *wa-kāna šubbiha 'alayhim qabla dālika* ("and he had been made to appear like [him] unto them (?) before that"). The narrative goes on to describe how "he" (Jesus? or that which had been made to appear like Jesus?) was arrested, bound, mocked, spat upon, and crowned with thorns,<sup>(53)</sup>

. . . حتى أتوا به الخشبة التي أرادوا أن يصلبوه عليها. فرفعه الله إليه،  
وصلبوا ما شُبَّه لهم.

#### TRANSLATION:

. . . until they brought him to the tree upon which they desired to crucify him. Then God raised him to Himself, and they crucified that which was made to appear [like him] in their eyes (*mā šubbiha lahum*).

After seven hours Jesus came to his mother and Mary Magdalene who were mourning over the corpse, and reassured them as follows:<sup>(54)</sup>

«إِنِّي قد رفعني الله، ولم يُصِبنِي إِلَّا خَيْر، وَإِنَّ هَذَا شَيْءٌ شُبَّهَ لَهُمْ!»

#### TRANSLATION:

"Truly God has raised me, and nothing but good has befallen me. And that [i.e., the corpse] is a thing which was made to appear [like me] in their eyes (*šay' šubbiha lahum*)."

Several features of Wahb's narrative deserve comment:

(a) The meaning of the phrase *wa-kāna šubbiha 'alayhim qabla dālika*, found just before the mention of the arrest, is not at all clear,<sup>(55)</sup> and is certainly intrusive at

50. ṬABARĪ, *Tafsīr* (1955–), 1X, 374–76, where al-Ṭabarī examines the mass of reports that he has reproduced and decides that one or the other of the two reports attributed to Wahb is most probably correct.

51. Idem, *Tārīḥ* (1960–69), 1, 601–2.

52. See below, pp. 295–96 (#1–6).

53. See below, p. 296 (#7).

54. Ibid. (#8).

55. ELDER ("Crucifixion" (1923), 248) translates thus: "And he had been confused in appearance to them before this," which is presumably why they needed Judas to identify him. On this reading, it is clearly Christ who is the object of the arrest and ill-treatment.

this point. It may represent an early addition to Wahb's original report by a hadith-reporter offended by Jesus' undergoing the shame of being mocked, spat upon, and crowned with thorns, even if he was then saved from crucifixion.<sup>(56)</sup> That this hadith report was tampered with over time is clear from the recension of al-Ta'labī, which explicitly states that it was *Judas* who was crucified in Jesus' place,<sup>(57)</sup> an impossibility in the original report which reports Judas' suicide by hanging.<sup>(58)</sup>

(b) This narrative, while making it very clear that Jesus was not crucified, goes no further than the Qur'ān itself in explaining what in that case actually did happen. Elder's comment is apt:<sup>(59)</sup>

All that we learn from this tradition which appears to be the most reliable is that it happened as it happened. The Koranic language is ambiguous, so traditions are brought in to explain and clarify its meaning. The tradition that seems most trustworthy *only repeats the Koranic language of the verse*. We have been searching for truth in a circle and we end where we began.

(c) Indeed, as mentioned above, the obscurity of the hadith report extends to the point that it is not even clear that what is crucified is a *person*. That which is crucified is described as *mā* (not *man*!) *šubbiha lahum* ("that which" -- and not "he who" -- "was made to appear like [him] in their eyes"), and later as *šay' šubbiha lahum* ("a thing that was made to appear like [him] in their eyes").

(d) This very obscurity is a strong argument for the antiquity of the report and the correctness of its attribution to Wahb b. Munabbih; in all probability it figured in his *Kitāb al-mubtada' wa-qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*.<sup>(60)</sup> The report fits well what we know of Wahb's work. Here, as elsewhere, he takes up and "Islamicizes" biblical materials in such a way that they might find a place in the imagination of the Islamic community.<sup>(61)</sup>

The importance of Wahb's "passion narrative" is that, towards the beginning of the eighth century A.D., a fair degree of "agnosticism" about the details of Christ's

56. AYOUB ("Christology" (1980), 119) believes the phrase to be an addition.

57. At the point of the crucifixion, al-Ta'labī's recension reads: *فلما أتوا به إلى الخشبة ليصلبوه، أظلمت الأرض، وأرسل الله الملائكة فحالوا بينهم وبين عيسى، وألقى شبه عيسى على الذي دلهم عليه، واسمه يودا. فصلبوه مكانه، وهم يظنون أنه عيسى* ("And when they brought him to the tree to crucify him, the earth became dark, God sent his angels to bar the way between them and Jesus, and He cast the resemblance of Jesus upon the one who pointed him out to them, whose name was Judas. And they crucified him in his place, assuming him to be Jesus."); TA'LABĪ, *Qīṣaṣ* (1954), 401.

58. See below, p. 296 (#9).

59. ELDER, "Crucifixion" (1923), 251. Emphasis his.

60. On the title of this book, see R.G. KHOURY, *Wahb* (1972), 204–205. For evidence that Wahb was indeed a *writer* of such a book, and a description of its probable contents, see *ibid.*, 222–46.

61. See *idem*, "Citations" (1977), 271: "Wahb was less of a translator than an arranger of old material that must have existed in one form or another before him . . . . If he did not translate the Bible in whole or in part . . . he was undoubtedly one of the first persons responsible for its popularization and islamicization."

escape from crucifixion was a possibility for Muslim transmitters of *ḥadīṭ* and *tafsīr*. And if the major "trajectory" of interpretation in the course of the eighth century tended towards ever greater specificity in the identification of a person said to have died in Christ's place, Wahb's "passion narrative," with its refusal to go beyond the statements of the Bible and the Qur'ān, continued for a long time to command respect, as al-Ṭabarī's use of it clearly shows.

### 3. The development of substitutionist exegesis

#### (a) *A gradual process*

It would be a mistake to insist that Wahb's "agnosticism" concerning the details of Christ's escape from death was satisfactory to all of his contemporaries. After all, Wahb's older contemporary Muḡāhid is held to have taught that the Qur'ān's *ṣubbiha lahum* means that another *man* died in Jesus' place. Furthermore, Wahb himself is named as the authority<sup>(62)</sup> for a curious hadith report that gives a "voluntary substitutionist" explanation of Jesus' escape from crucifixion.<sup>(63)</sup> What I would suggest is that the "agnosticism" of Wahb's "passion narrative" helps us to see that substitutionist theories developed gradually and were not necessarily standard Islamic teaching in the early decades of the eighth Christian century.

To advance this suggestion seriously, it is first necessary to examine a hadith report preserved in al-Ṭabarī's comment on *al-Ġum'ah* (61):14, where a "voluntary substitutionist" interpretation of the *ṣubbiha lahum* is attributed to the *ṣaḥābī* ("Associate" of Muḡammad) 'Abd Allāh Ibn 'Abbās (d. 687),<sup>(64)</sup> the "father of Qur'ān interpretation."<sup>(65)</sup> If Ibn 'Abbās did indeed teach a detailed substitutionist interpretation of the *ṣubbiha lahum*, the correspondence between logical and temporal progression in the trajectory we have studied would collapse. The attribution of the report to Ibn 'Abbās can, however, be questioned. The *isnād* (Abū Mu'āwiyah / al-A'maš / al-Minhāl / Sa'īd b. Ġubayr / Ibn 'Abbās) is *not* one of the normal channels by which the exegetical tradition of Ibn 'Abbās -- including that concerning *Sūrat al-Ġum'ah* -- reached al-Ṭabarī.<sup>(66)</sup> Furthermore, if Ibn 'Abbās *had* taught a detailed

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62. For the *isnād*, see above, p. 103, note 39. Questions may be raised about the reliability of the attribution. IBN HAĠĀR (*Tahdīb* (1907–10), XI, 9–10 (#19)) does not mention Hārūn b. 'Antarah as a transmitter of Wahb's material. (On Hārūn, see next page.)

63. According to this report, *all* seventeen [*sic*] disciples who were in the house with Jesus were made to appear like him, and one volunteered to go out, identify himself as Jesus and be crucified in his place. ṬABARĪ, *Tafsīr* (1955–), IX, 368 (#10779) [ET ELDER, "Crucifixion" (1923), 246–47, or ROBINSON, *Christ* (1991), 127–28].

64. ṬABARĪ, *Tafsīr* (1954–57), XXVIII, 92.

65. GAS I, 25.

66. For a great amount of detail on the transmission of the Ibn 'Abbās material to al-Ṭabarī, see HORST, "Überlieferung" (1953), 293–95, 303, 307, and GOLDFELD, "*Tafsīr*" (1981).

"voluntary substitutionist" interpretation of the *šubbiha lahum* we would have expected to find this reproduced in the exegetical material of the next generation of interpreters.

(b) *A Kūfān connection?*

If we ask about the *provenance* of the substitutionist hadith report attributed to Ibn 'Abbās, when we turn our attention to the other names listed in the *isnād* we quickly discover that the place to which we must look for the report's circulation – and probable origin – is *Kūfah*. al-A'maš (d. 765) was a Kūfan,<sup>(67)</sup> as was his (alleged) source al-Minhāl b. 'Amr,<sup>(68)</sup> and *his* (alleged) source Sa'īd b. Ġubayr (d. 714).<sup>(69)</sup> In all probability we are dealing with a Kūfan hadith report the *isnād* of which was "raised" to the *ṣaḥābī* Ibn 'Abbās, probably at some time during or shortly after the Abbasid assumption of power.<sup>(70)</sup>

The hadith report attributed to Ibn 'Abbās is not the only one for which we may infer a connection with Kūfah in the early or mid-eighth century. When we look to the other developed substitutionist reports listed above<sup>(71)</sup> we note several instances of this connection. The substitutionist hadith report attributed to Wahb was transmitted by Hārūn b. 'Antarah (d. 759), from Kūfah.<sup>(72)</sup> al-Suddī (d. 745) lived and worked in Kūfah.<sup>(73)</sup> And finally, Ibn Ishāq (d. 767) spent time in Kūfah before fetching up in Baghdad.<sup>(74)</sup> From all this, we may plausibly conclude that the substitutionist exegesis of *al-Nisā'* (4):157 was well known in Kūfah in the early or mid-eighth century A.D.

(c) *Massignon on the "docetic" interpretation of al-Nisā' (4):157*

The connection between the substitutionist exegesis of *al-Nisā'* (4):157 and Kūfah in the mid-eighth century, inferred from an analysis of *isnāds* in al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, connects up in a striking manner with an argument made by Louis Massignon in an article of 1932.<sup>(75)</sup> Massignon was calling attention to an ancient but minority strain of Muslim thinking for which *al-Nisā'* (4):157 does *not* deny the physical death of Christ by crucifixion. There is, for example, the stirring image of al-Ḥallāğ

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67. This was noted by ROBINSON, *Christ* (1991), 140–41.

68. IBN HAĠAR, *Tahdīb* (1907–10), X, 319–21 (#555). Ibn Haġar does not give the date of al-Minhāl's death.

69. *GAS* I, 28–29.

70. See LEEMHUIS, "Origins" (1988), 24–25.

71. See pp. 103–4.

72. IBN HAĠAR, *Tahdīb* (1907–10), XI, 9–10 (#19).

73. *GAS* I, 32–33.

74. See HODGSON, *Venture* (1974), 254–55, who mentions that Ibn Ishāq probably had had pro-'Alid political inclinations.

75. MASSIGNON, "Christ" (1932), 533–36.

(d. 922) quoting this very verse while himself being crucified;<sup>(76)</sup> the soul divinized through its union with God -- as in the case of Jesus or al-Ḥallāḡ -- does not perish even when the body is killed.<sup>(77)</sup> A number of Ismā'īlī writings explicitly state that *al-Nisā'* (4):157 does not deny the death of Christ on the cross.<sup>(78)</sup> And Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209) wrote that it was the opinion of "the majority of the scholars" (though not his own) that the verse means that while Jesus' body was killed, his soul -- Jesus *fī l-ḥaqīqah*, "in truth" -- was not.<sup>(79)</sup> Massignon gives the impression, at least, that he believes that such interpretations reflect the correct and original intent of the verse.<sup>(80)</sup>

But if the Qur'ān itself does not deny the crucifixion of Christ (in Massignon's view), whence comes the traditional Islamic interpretation of *al-Nisā'* (4):157? Massignon looked for the origins of what he termed the "docetic"<sup>(81)</sup> interpretation of *al-Nisā'* (4):157 -- i.e. the non-crucifixion of Christ and the death of a substitute -- in the speculation of radical Shi'ite or *ḡulāt* groups about the cruel deaths of some of the legitimate imams: "God not having been able to let them 'die before their time,' and the particle of the divine (*la parcelle divine*) which dwelled in them having necessarily been taken out of reach of their assassins, there remained nothing of them but an apparent form (*ṣibh*), a scrap of humanity (*loque humaine*) which God caused a demon or a damned soul to assume during the death agonies."<sup>(82)</sup> Massignon suggests that it was only about the year 150 H./767 that "docetic exegesis" modelled on these radical Shi'ite understandings of the deaths of the imams "infiltrated" Sunnite commentary on *al-Nisā'* (4):157.<sup>(83)</sup>

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76. Reported by al-Ġazālī in his *Kitāb faḍā'il al-Bāṭiniyyah wa faḍā'il*, ed. GOLDZIHNER, *Streitschrift* (1916), 30. See also the poem attributed by Attār (d. 1220) to the crucified al-Ḥallāḡ, FT MASSIGNON, *Œuvre* (1941–46), 135–38, or HAYEK, *Christ* (1959), 233–36.

77. MASSIGNON, "Christ" (1932), 534.

78. On these see below, p. 144.

79. Cited in MASSIGNON, *Recueil* (1929), 193 [FT HAYEK, *Christ* (1959), 230].

80. MASSIGNON, "Christ" (1932), 535.

81. The use of "docetic" to refer to Islamic interpretations of *al-Nisā'* (4):157 has been criticized by AYOUB, "Christology" (1980), 95–96. His objection had been anticipated long before by GEROCK, *Christologie* (1839), 58.

82. Ibid., 535. Massignon refers to: (i) 'Abd al-Qādir al-Ġilānī's description of the doctrines of the Ḥaṭṭābiyyah. One of its subgroups, the Bazīgiyyah, are described as believing that Ġa'far al-Šādiq was the invisible God whose visible form (*ḥāḍiri l-ṣūrah*) was -- changing Ḡilānī's active voice to a passive -- *ṣubbiha lahum* (ĠILĀNĪ, *Ġunyah* (1928), I, 99–100). (ii) The report of al-Baḡdādī concerning the Muḥammadiyyah, who believed that Muḥammad "Pure Soul" escaped death when a devil in his image died in his place (BAĠDĀDĪ, *Farq* (n.d.), 37–38). (iii) Similar speculations concerning Ḥusayn, according to al-Malaṭī in his *Kitāb al-tanbīh wa-l-radd 'alā ahl al-ahwā' wa-l-biddā'*.

83. MASSIGNON, "Christ" (1932), 535, repeated in (for example) BASETTI-SANI, *Corano* (1972), or BORRMANS, "Mystery" (1976), 12–13.

(d) *Gathering up the threads*

Massignon was in all probability mistaken if he believed that he had identified the source of the traditional interpretation of *al-Nisa* (4):157 as a denial of the crucifixion of Christ, but his analysis is of great interest all the same. Its importance at once becomes clear when one remembers that in the early to mid-eighth century it was *Kūfah* that was the center of the activities of the *ḡulāt* groups and the hotbed of their speculation -- speculation about the deaths of their imams as well as speculation about Jesus, who for many of the *ḡulāt* groups was expected to play a prominent role in the approaching eschatological drama.<sup>(84)</sup> Taking all these bits and pieces of evidence together, I suggest that:

(i) on the basis of the *isnāds* given by al-Ṭabarī, substitutionist exegesis of *al-Nisā'* (4):157 circulated and developed in *Kūfah* towards the middle of the eighth Christian century;

(ii) this exegesis influenced and/or was influenced by the speculations of *ḡulāt* groups about the deaths of the legitimate imams;<sup>(85)</sup>

(iii) attempts were made to gain more general acceptance for the exegesis after the accession of the Abbasids, as is suggested by what we have assumed to be the "raising" of the hadith report discussed above to Ibn 'Abbās. The Islamic exegetical tradition bears witness to the fact that these attempts were ultimately successful.

### C. The Earliest Christian Evidence

We now turn to two Christian texts from the first Islamic century and a half, the first of which has not been considered before in connection with the development of Islamic understandings of the end of Jesus' past ministry.

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84. See KHALIDI, "Role" (1990), and, for the *Manṣūriyyah*, TURNER, "Abū Manṣūr" (1977), 72. It may well be that speculation about Jesus' eschatological role was a factor spurring and shaping that about the circumstances surrounding his being raised alive to God.

85. See ROBINSON, *Christ* (1991), 141. Robinson points out another bit of evidence for the substitutionist exegesis – *Kūfah* – *ḡulāt*/Shi'ite connection: the presence of a recension of the substitutionist report attributed to Ibn 'Abbās in the *Tafsīr* of the Shi'ite commentator al-Qummī (d. 919), where it is attributed to Abū Ḡa'far Muḥammad al-Bāqir, the fifth Imam. See ROBINSON, *Christ* (1991), 171, 177.

## 1. "The Vision of Shenute"

"The Vision of Shenute" is a little historical apocalypse<sup>(86)</sup> imbedded in the "Arabic life of Shenute," a compilation of earlier Coptic materials.<sup>(87)</sup> In it, Christ appears to Shenute and "predicts" the coming of the Persians, followed by the Arabs, with clear references to Heraclius' governor-patriarch Cyrus (who according to the text is *al-Dağğāl*, the Antichrist) and to the flight and return of the Coptic patriarch Benjamin. Then we read:<sup>(88)</sup>

وبعد ذلك يقوموا بني إسماعيل وبني عيسوا ويطردون المسيحيين. والبقية  
منهم يهيمون أن يسودوا على الأرض كلها ويملكوها. ويبنوا الهيكل الذي  
بيروشلیم. فإذا كان هذا، اعلم أنه قد قرب آخر الزمان، وقد دنا.

### TRANSLATION:

And after that, the Sons of Ishmael and the Sons of Esau will rise up and expel the Christians. The remainder of them will strive to dominate and rule all of the land. They will build the temple which is in Jerusalem. When this takes place, know that the end of time has approached and drawn nigh.

The reference to the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple can only refer to the construction of the Dome of the Rock under the Umayyad caliph 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān.<sup>(89)</sup> Now, construction of the Dome is normally dated to 691-92, although it may have begun as early as 688-89.<sup>(90)</sup> Since the rebuilding of the Jerusalem "temple" is the last of the historical details to be woven into the apocalypse, we may expect that the work was written at about this time or shortly afterwards.

Are there other indications that might help us to fix a date? Amélineau believed that the phrase "the remainder of them shall strive to dominate and rule all the land" refers to the second *fitnah* (civil war), and that the text should therefore be dated before its end with the death of 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr (in 692).<sup>(91)</sup> This may be a case of overinterpreting the text, but another argument for a date from the early 690's is that the "Vision" does *not* mention 'Abd al-Malik's coinage reform of 695, viewed in apocalyptic terms in Egyptian Christian works such as the "Apocalypse of

86. For a description of the genre "historical apocalypse" and an enlightening discussion of their use as historical sources, see ALEXANDER, "Apocalypses" (1968).

87. *GCAL* I, 463. Ed. AMÉLINEAU, *Monuments* (1888), 289-478; "The Vision of Shenute" is found at pp. 338-46 [FT and comment lii-lviii]. The manuscript from which the work is transcribed is described at p. xlviii.

88. Copied without correction from AMÉLINEAU, *Monuments* (1888), 341.

89. On the Christian description of the building of the Dome of the Rock as "rebuilding the Temple," see above, pp. 69.

90. O. GRABAR, "Dome" (1959), 34.

91. AMÉLINEAU, *Monuments* (1888), lvii-lviii.

(pseudo-) Athanasius"<sup>(92)</sup> or the "Letter of (pseudo-) Pisentius."<sup>(93)</sup> While arguments from silence are dangerous, here it seems that a good case can be made for dating the text to 692, plus or minus a few years.

The importance of all this is that shortly after the mention of the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, the text has Christ describe the Banū Ismā'īl as "those who deny my sufferings which I accepted upon the cross!"<sup>(94)</sup> We therefore have before us the Arabic translation of a Coptic witness, very likely from before the end of the seventh century, to the effect that the Muslims with whom the Egyptian Christian community came into contact denied Jesus' suffering on the cross.

## 2. John of Damascus (d. ca. 750): "Concerning Heresies," Ch. 100/101<sup>(95)</sup>

In the year 743 or shortly thereafter<sup>(96)</sup> Saint John of Damascus (Yuhannā b. Sargūn b. Manṣūr) wrote his great compilation and systematization of the patristic theological heritage, the Πηγὴ Γνώσεως ("Fount of Knowledge"), the second part of which, Περὶ Αἱρέσεων ("Concerning Heresies") has as its Chapter 100 or 101 a treatment of Islam.<sup>(97)</sup> In it, the Islamic conception of the end of Christ's first-century ministry is described as follows:<sup>(98)</sup>

He [Muḥammad in the Qur'ān] says . . . that the Jews, having themselves transgressed the Law, wanted to crucify him; and having arrested him they crucified his shadow (ἔσταύρωσαν τὴν σκιάν αὐτοῦ), but Christ himself was not crucified (they say), nor did he die, for God took him unto Himself in heaven, because He loved him.

92. See above, p. 79.

Martinez makes a good argument that the "Apocalypse" is to be dated to "the decade preceding 724" (MARTINEZ, *Apocalyptic* (1985), 267). He describes it and "The Vision of Shenute" as "roughly contemporary," although he notes that the "Apocalypse" is more developed than the "Vision" in the description of the Muslims' oppressive policies (ibid.). These observations are not inconsistent with the present proposal to date the "Vision" to the early 690's.

93. PÉRIER, "Pisuntios" (1914), 306 [FT 318].

94. هؤلاء الذين يُنكرون آلامي الذي قبلتها على الصليب; AMÉLINEAU, *Monuments* (1888), 341.

95. Ed. KOTTER, *Liber* (1981), 60–67, and see SAHAS, *Heresy* (1972) for a study and ET.

96. For the date, see SAHAS, *Heresy* (1972), 54.

97. It must be pointed out that the authenticity of this chapter has been challenged, notably by ABEL ("Chapitre CI" (1963)), but his arguments have been met in detail by A.-T. KHOURY (*Théologiens* (1969), 49–55) and SAHAS (*Heresy* (1972), 58–66), partly on the basis of the text-critical work of KOTTER (*Überlieferung* (1959), 196–214). As is often the case with his work in the history of Muslim-Christian controversy, Abel was led astray by a rigid mental construct of its historical development which tended to distort rather than to serve the evidence. Kotter has now provided a critical edition of the Περὶ Αἱρέσεων, and decides in favor of the inclusion of the chapter on Islam; KOTTER, *Liber* (1981), 7.

98. Ibid., 61 (lines 18, 22–25).

There are two points to be made about this passage. The first is that St. John of Damascus, familiar with the Umayyad court and undoubtedly having at least some degree of competence in Arabic, knew that the Muslims with whom he came into contact understood *al-Nisā'* (4):157 as denying the death of Jesus upon the cross. The second point is that there is no hint here of John's familiarity with a story about the crucifixion of a *substitute*; that which is crucified is Christ's σκιά, his "shade" or "shadow." This is an odd choice of words, but may perhaps be explained by a simple confusion between Arabic *šabah* ("resemblance") and *šabaḥ* ("shade" in the sense of a ghost or spirit, accurately rendered by σκιά). If this is correct, the interpretation of *al-Nisā'* (4):157 with which John was familiar was no more specific than *šalabū šabahahu*, "they crucified his 'resemblance,'" which John rendered ἐσταύρωσαν τὴν σκιάν αὐτοῦ. There is no indication in the text that John was aware of speculation as to what or who the crucified *šabah* might have been.

#### D. A Summary

Gathering together what has been said in this chapter thus far, I hazard the following summary:

1. *Sūrat al-Nisā'* (4):157 does indeed deny that Jesus died on the cross, and it was so understood by Muslims as far back as we can trace (e.g. in "The Vision of Shenute" of the 690s, and in all of al-Ṭabarī's sources).

2. The Qur'ān and its very earliest commentary -- as represented by the hadith report of Wahb b. Munabbih studied above -- do *not* provide any clear picture of what actually did happen at the end of Jesus' ministry. In Wahb's report, what was crucified in Jesus' place is defined no more closely than *mā šubbiha lahum* or *šay' šubbiha lahum*.

3. This "agnosticism" in the interpretation of *al-Nisā'* (4):157 may long have been common among Muslims, at least those of particular political and ideological "zones." It is probably reflected, for example, in the report (from about the year 743) of John of Damascus. In contact with Muslims at the Umayyad center, the Damascene appears to be unfamiliar with any concrete substitutionist understanding of Jesus' escape from crucifixion, stating instead that Muslims claim that the Jews crucified Jesus' "shadow," perhaps a mistranslation of *šabah*.

4. While simple substitutionist theories to the effect that a person was crucified in Jesus' place were advanced early on, for example by Muḡāhid, the evidence suggests that such theories came to enjoy special popularity in Kūfah in the early and mid-eighth century. There they may have fit in well with other speculations concerning Jesus among the *ḡulāt* groups, and may have been elaborated in tandem with substitutionist theories concerning the deaths of their imams.

5. As is well known, the substitutionist understanding of *al-Nisā'* (4):157 eventually became the standard "Sunnite" interpretation of the text, though not before the accession of the Abbasids. This understanding answered the need for a concrete interpretation of the puzzles surrounding the end of Jesus' ministry, and came to fit

into a politically acceptable complex of interpretation of Jesus' rescue from crucifixion, his ascension, and his eschatological role.<sup>(99)</sup>

6. As we approach texts from the Arabic Christian-Muslim discussions of the later eighth and ninth centuries, we are not justified in simply assuming that the Muslims writing or addressed by or envisaged in these texts hold substitutionist views. These Muslims will be nearly unanimous in believing that Jesus did not die on the cross, but they may well be "agnostic" as to precisely *how* God rescued His messenger.

## II. Arabic Christian Defences of the Historicity of the Crucifixion

### Introduction

The previous sections have made it clear that, as far back as we can trace, Muslims believed that *al-Nisā'* (4):157 denied the historicity of Christ's crucifixion, and that Christians became aware of this at an early date. How did they respond?

In the present chapter we shall examine only those Christian apologetic arguments which *directly* make a case for the historicity of the crucifixion of Christ. In later chapters a variety of kinds of *indirect* evidence for truth of Christian claims about the cross will be encountered. The apologetic role of *miracles*, not least those miracles done in the name of the Crucified or with the sign of the cross, has already been mentioned and will be examined again later.<sup>(100)</sup> We shall also encounter what might be called arguments of *salvific necessity* and of *intra-systemic coherence*: the centrality and irreplaceability of the crucifixion of Christ to the entire Christian biblical/dogmatic understanding of reality, within which may be found salvation, the denial of which leads to intolerable consequences. While such arguments need not be complex – a claim to intra-systemic coherence lies in the background every time a Christian advances a biblical proof-text to make an apologetic point – they can also be worked out with great sophistication, as we shall see below.<sup>(101)</sup>

The *direct* arguments for the historicity of Christ's crucifixion employed by the Christian apologists studied here are for the most part drawn from Muslims' and the Christians' scriptures: on the one hand the Qur'ān, and on the other the Bible, especially the Old Testament. The most important of these arguments are already to be found in the debate of the Nestorian catholicos Timothy with the Abbasid caliph al-Mahdī, held in or about the year 781. Accordingly, in the following paragraphs we

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99. Over against the *ḡulāt* groups and their apocalyptic Jesus, KHALIDI ("Role" (1994)) refers to the "legitimizing Establishment, where Jesus eventually becomes an irrelevant and circumscribed apocalyptic figure in canonical *Ḥadīth*."

100. See above, pp. 82–83, 92, and below, pp. 277–80.

101. See p. 226.

shall follow Timothy's train of thought, allowing his debate to provide us an outline into which other material may be incorporated.

## A. *Āl 'Imrān* (3):55 and the Qur'ānic Sequence Death - Resurrection - Ascension

### 1. Timothy's debate, I<sup>(102)</sup>

The part of the debate between al-Mahdī and Timothy that concerns the historicity of the crucifixion of Christ begins, not surprisingly, with the caliph's quoting *al-Nisā'* (4):157: "they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, but [God] made a likeness for them."<sup>(103)</sup> Timothy responded to the caliph's Qur'ān citation by citing two other Qur'ānic verses: *Maryam* (19):33, *وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيَّ يَوْمَ وُلِدْتُ وَيَوْمَ أَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ أُبْعَثُ حَيًّا* ("Peace be upon me, the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I am raised up alive!") and *Āl 'Imrān* (3):55, *إِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَا عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ اذْهَبْ فَرَأَيْتُكَ وَرَأَيْتُكَ وَرَأَيْتُكَ وَرَأَيْتُكَ* ("When God said, 'Jesus, I will cause thee to die (?) and will raise thee to me"). The caliph immediately responded that Jesus had not *yet* died, but would die in the future.<sup>(104)</sup> To this, Timothy responded something as follows:<sup>(105)</sup>

وهكذا لم يصعد بعدُ إلى السماء ولم يُبعث حَيًّا، وسيصعد ويُبعث فيما  
بعد! لكن عندكم أنه صعد إلى السماء حَيًّا. وما صعد حتى يموت

102. The passage under consideration here is found in MINGANA, "Apology" (1928), 114/1/4–20 (Syriac text) [ET 40–41]. The Arabic versions are found at PUTMAN/SAMIR, *Église* (1975), 35\*–36\* (#186–90), and CASPAR, "Versions" (1977), 141 (#30).

103. The Syriac text (MINGANA, "Apology" (1928), 114/1/5–6) gives *ܐܠܗܐ ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܥܝܫܐ ܕܡܪܝܡ* in place of the Qur'ān's *شَبَّ لَهُمْ*; it is equivalent to *شَبَّ لَهُمْ تَشْبِيهًا*, "He [God] likened for them a likeness." There is no hint as to what the likeness might be.

104. This response reflects the picture of Christ's career that by the end of the eighth century had become standard in "establishment" circles: Jesus, having been preserved from crucifixion, was being kept alive by God, and one day would return to earth to fight and kill the Antichrist, live for a certain period of time, and then finally die. For a presentation and discussion of the relevant hadith reports about Jesus' eschatological role see IBN KAṬĪR, *Tafsīr* (1970–83), III, 15–23. For a recent Western study, see ROBINSON, *Christ* (1991), 78–105, especially the summary at 104–5.

105. I reproduce here Timothy's response according to the Arabic recension of the debate in twenty-seven questions, CASPAR, "Versions" (1977), 141 (#30). The Syriac text is found in MINGANA, "Apology" (1928), 114/1/14–29 (closely followed by the longer Arabic recension, PUTMAN/SAMIR, *Apologie* (1975), 36\* (#190)).

For Timothy's debate I normally follow the Syriac text, which is the oldest witness. Here, however, there is some confusion in the Syriac, the most obvious example of which is the mistranslation of the verb *بُعِثَ* ("was raised," as in *Maryam* (19):33) as *ܐܠܗܐ ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܥܝܫܐ ܕܡܪܝܡ* ("was sent"). The redactor of the Arabic recension in twenty-seven questions skillfully eliminated confusing elements in the Syriac text and reconstructed the argument according to the logic of the passage as a whole.

وَيُبْعَثُ، كما ورد متقدِّماً. فإذا صعد، فقد مات قبلُ . . . .

#### TRANSLATION:

And likewise he has not yet ascended into heaven, and has not yet been raised up alive, but will ascend and be raised later! But you have it that he ascended into heaven alive. He did not ascend until he died and was raised, as we saw earlier. So if he ascended, then he had previously died . . . .

To understand the argument, we must keep the order of the verbs in *Maryam* (19):33 and *Āl 'Imrān* (3):55 firmly in mind: *amūtu, ub'aṭu; mutawaffika, rāfi'uka*. Timothy (as presented by the perceptive Arabic redactor) assumes that the order of the verbs in the Qur'ānic text reflects the order of their occurrence, so that taken together the two verses establish the logical and temporal sequence: death, resurrection, ascension. It is then on this Qur'ānic basis that it is argued that any doubts about the past occurrence of the first member of the sequence (i.e., Jesus' *death*) must also reflect upon the later members. Therefore, if Jesus has not yet died but will die in the future, then "he has not yet ascended into heaven, and has not yet been raised up alive, but will ascend and be raised later!" Conversely, affirmation of the historicity of the final member of the sequence (i.e., Jesus' *ascension*) must also imply affirmation of the historicity of the previous members: "But you have it that he ascended into heaven alive . . . . [I]f he ascended, then he had previously died."

## 2. *Āl 'Imrān* (3):55 between Christian apology and Islamic commentary

That *Āl 'Imrān* (3):55 very early became a weapon in the Christian apologetic arsenal is shown by its citation not only by Timothy<sup>(106)</sup> but also in the ancient apologetic treatise *Fī taḥlīṭ Allāh al-wāḥid*, where it serves as a witness to Christ's ascension.<sup>(107)</sup> From the early ninth century we have the claim of "The Apocalypse/Legend of Baḥīrā" that the original, *Christian*, intent of *Āl 'Imrān* (3):55 was as a witness to Christ's death and resurrection.<sup>(108)</sup> And in the *Risālat al-Kindī* the entire passage *Āl 'Imrān* (3):55-58 is cited without commentary as an unproblematic witness to the Christian understanding of Christ's career.<sup>(109)</sup>

106. And subsequently in the *beta* recension of the Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī debate. See, for example, Paris ar. 215, f. 62<sup>r</sup>, or VOLLERS, "Religionsgespräch" (1908), 59.

107. Sinai ar. 154, ff. 112<sup>r</sup>-v (GIBSON, *Treatise* (1899), 88\*/5-7).

108. GOTTHEIL, "Legend" (1900-1), 59 [ET (1903), 138].

109. TARTAR, "Dialogue" (1977), 206 [FT idem, *Dialogue* (1985), 278].

It is not impossible that the Christian apologetic use of this verse was a factor pushing Muslim commentators to seek interpretations of *Āl 'Imrān* (3):55 that did not involve Christ's *death*, at least not his death *in the past*. Thus al-Ṭabarī reports the suggestions that the phrase *innī mutawaffika* (which I tentatively translated "I will cause thee to die") means "I will cause thee to *sleep*," so that God raised Jesus to Himself *in his sleep*;<sup>(110)</sup> or that it means *innī qābiḍuka*, "I will grasp thee," so that *mutawaffika* and *rāfi'uka* are virtual synonyms.<sup>(111)</sup> We should not, however, exaggerate the degree to which Christian pressure determined this exegesis. What is decisive for al-Ṭabarī in choosing the interpretation *mutawaffika* = *qābiḍuka* is not the necessity of denying the crucifixion of Jesus, but rather the necessity of bringing the verse into harmony with the sound hadith reports that state that Jesus will die only after he returns to fight and kill the Antichrist.<sup>(112)</sup>

We have evidence for the use of yet another interpretation of *Āl 'Imrān* (3):55 and its role in debate with Christians. The anonymous Nestorian tract *al-Radd 'alā man ḡaḥada l-ṣalb* ("The Refutation of the One Who Denies the Crucifixion") records a Muslim response to the Christian use of *Āl 'Imrān* (3):55 based on a possibility of Arabic grammar: *al-taqdīm wa-l-ta'ḥīr*, the occurrence of words in the *reverse* of their logical or temporal order.<sup>(113)</sup> As applied to *Āl 'Imrān* (3):55, this means that in the phrase *innī mutawaffika wa-rāfi'uka ilayya* ("I will cause thee to die and raise thee to me"), "the 'and' does not impose the [temporal] order," as al-Ṭabarsī put it,<sup>(114)</sup> adding that al-Ḍaḥḥāk (d. 723) supported this argument with *al-Qamar* (54):18, فكيف نُذَرُ ("How then were My chastisement and My warnings?"), where the *nuzur* ("warnings") obviously precede the *aḍāb* ("chastisement") despite the word order.<sup>(115)</sup> Therefore the passage means: "I will raise thee to me and will cause thee to die, i.e. *afterwards*."<sup>(116)</sup>

In *al-Radd 'alā man ḡaḥada l-ṣalb*, the answer to this argument is the citation of another Qur'ānic passage in which God is the subject, and Jesus the object, of the verb *tawaffā*: *al-Mā'idah* (5):117, فَلَمَّا تَوَفَّيْتَنِي كُنْتُ أَنْتَ الرَّقِيبَ عَلَيْهِمْ ("when thou

110. ṬABARĪ, *Tafsīr* (1955–), VI, 455 (#7133). This interpretation, favored by Ibn Kaṭīr, receives its plausibility from the Qur'ān's use of the verb *tawaffā* to refer to sleep in *al-An'ām* (6):60 and *al-Zumar* (39):42.

111. Ibid., VI, 455–57 (#7134–40).

112. Ibid., VI, 460–61. For extensive discussions of the interpretation of the verb *tawaffā* in the Qur'ān and the classical commentators, see ROBINSON, *Christ* (1991), 117–26.

113. See below, pp. 298–99 (#2). The possibility of such an interpretation is mentioned by ṬABARĪ, *Tafsīr* (1955–), VI, 458.

114. ṬABARSĪ (*Maḡma'* (n.d.), II, 95. Practically the same language is used in a gloss on a line of the *Ḥamāsah* by the philologist Yaḥyā b. 'Alī al-Tibrizī (d. 1109), who gives the example of *Āl 'Imrān* (3):43: اسجدني واركعي ("prostrate yourself and bow"), although in actual prayer the bowing precedes the prostration; FREYTAG, *Carmina* (1828), 558.

115. ṬABARSĪ (*Maḡma'* (n.d.), II, 95.

116. So Ibn Kaṭīr on the authority of Qatādah (d. 736) and others: هذا من المقدم والمؤخر، تقديره «إني رافعك إليّ ومتوفيك، يعني بعد ذلك» IBN KATĪR, *Tafsīr* (1970–83), II, 44.

didst cause me [Jesus] to die (?), Thou wast Thyself the watcher over them").<sup>(117)</sup> Left unstated in *al-Radd* is the fact that this Qur'ānic phrase is taken from an exchange between God and Jesus introduced (in verse 116) with the words **وَإِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ** ("And when God said..."). Therefore *tawaffaytanī* ("thou didst cause me to die") is a past tense verb in a past speech (*iḍ qāla*). The point is that once the Muslim admits that Jesus' *wafāh* in *Āl 'Imrān* (3):55 is his *death*, then the parallel phrase in *al-Mā'idah* (5):117 can leave no doubt that his *wafāh* occurred *in the past*. *al-Radd* then goes on to assimilate the rest of the verse to the Christian narrative: God was the watcher over the Christians after Jesus died, and after his ascension into heaven.<sup>(118)</sup>

The argument of *al-Radd* ends here, but a further step in the discussion had been anticipated by Muslim commentators. Qatādah, having opted for the solution of *al-taqdīm wa-l-ta'hīr* in interpreting *Āl 'Imrān* (3):55, consistently argued that in *al-Mā'idah* (5):116 God's questioning of Jesus is *future* rather than past. Ibn Ḡurayḡ pointed out that this requires that *iḍ qāla -llāhu* ("When God *said*") be understood as *iḍā qāla -llāhu* ("When God *will say*"), and defended the possibility of such an interpretation.<sup>(119)</sup> al-Ṭabarī, however, rejected this interpretation on the basis of common Arabic usage: *iḍ* is used for the past, *iḍā* for the future.<sup>(120)</sup>

### 3. A summary

The first step in Timothy's argument has been that *Āl 'Imrān* (3):55 and *Maryam* (19):33 imply that Jesus underwent death, resurrection to life, and ascension to God, in that order. Since there is complete consensus between Christians and Muslims concerning the reality of the ascension of Jesus to God, the reality of his death is established.

Thus far, Timothy's argument appears strong. It may be attacked, but we have seen that the attack sometimes resorts to abstruse grammatical devices, such as *al-taqdīm wa-l-ta'hīr* or the understanding of *iḍ* as *iḍā*, that a respected Muslim commentator like al-Ṭabarī found questionable. And we note that al-Ṭabarī's own solution involves a somewhat forced definition (*mutawaffīka = qābiḍuka*) dictated not so much by the Qur'ān's own usage as by a need to harmonize the text with a conception found in the hadith literature.

117. See below, pp. 298–99 (#2).

118. Compare the "Apocalypse/Legend of Baḥīrā," where we find echoes of the same phrase, but with Jesus as the subject: **وَأَسْلَمَ رُوحَ نَاسُوتِهِ وَصَارَ الرَّقِيبَ عَلَى بَيْعَتِهِ وَتَلَامِيذِهِ** ("he gave up the spirit of his humanity, and became the watcher over his Church and his disciples"); GOTTHEIL, "Legend" (1900–1), 60 [ET (1903), 138].

119. ṬABARĪ, *Tafsīr* (1955–), XI, 234–36 (#13031). See also IBN QUTAYBAH, *Muṣkil* (1954), 227, where this verse is offered as a case of the past (here **قَالَ**) being used for the present or the future (**يَقُولُ**).

120. ṬABARĪ, *Tafsīr* (1955–), XI, 236.

Timothy has not yet said anything about the *manner* of this death. It is to that that we now turn.<sup>(121)</sup>

## B. The Witness of the Christian Scripture

### 1. Timothy's debate, II

The historicity of the death of Jesus having been established from the Qur'ān, the next step in Timothy's argument is to demonstrate that this death took place by *crucifixion*. To do this he calls attention to *the prophets' predictions* of the passion of Christ, recorded in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New. In response to al-Mahdī's question "Which of the prophets said that he died by crucifixion?"<sup>(122)</sup> Timothy gives five examples, one each from the prophecies of David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Zechariah:<sup>(123)</sup> Psalm 22:16b-18 ("They pierced my hands and feet, all my bones cried out, they gazed at me and watched me. They divided my garments among them, and for my raiment they cast lots."), Isaiah 53:5 ("He was killed for our sins and abased for our iniquity."), Jeremiah 11:19 ("Wood shall ravage his flesh and shall cast him out from the land of the living."),<sup>(124)</sup> Daniel 9:26a ("The anointed one (*mšīhā*) shall be killed, and shall have nothing."), and Zechariah 13:7 ("Smite the shepherd of Israel upon his cheeks,"<sup>(125)</sup> and "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd").<sup>(126)</sup> Timothy concludes his list by noting that it is by no means exhaustive: "the prophecies in which the prophets spoke of his death, killing, and crucifixion are numerous."<sup>(127)</sup>

Timothy's use of these Old Testament prophecies of the passion and death of Christ raises a number of questions. Does he expect that his appeal to the Old Testament is going to be convincing to his Muslim interlocutor? Or does the limited

121. We recall that, like Timothy, the contemporary scholar Räsänen believes that the Qur'ān affirms that Jesus died; see above, p. 100. It is in the *next* step of the argument that the Nestorian catholicos and the Finnish New Testament scholar part company.

122. MINGANA, "Apology" (1928), 114/2/1.

123. The following are my translations of the (Peshitta) citations in the Syriac text, MINGANA, "Apology" (1928), 114/2/2-15.

124. On the reading of Jeremiah 11:19 as a prophecy of the crucifixion, which is attested as early as Justin Martyr, see ARMSTRONG, "Cross" (1979), 23, 33, 38. Timothy adds Isaiah 50:6 ("I gave my body to blows and cheeks to slaps. I did not turn my face away from from shame and spitting.") to his citation from Jeremiah.

125. The phrase "of Israel upon his cheeks" is not found in Zechariah 13:7.

126. The Arabic versions for the most part follow this list. The recension in twenty-seven questions omits Jer 11:19 and Zech 13:7, while the longer recension correctly attributes Is 50:6 to Isaiah, and extends the Zechariah citation to include Zech 13:6 ("What are these wounds in your hands?"). CASPAR, "Versions" (1977), 141-42 (#31); PUTMAN/SAMIR, *Église* (1975), 36\*-37\* (#193-97).

127. MINGANA, "Apology" (1928), 114/2/15-16.

role that these prophecies play in his argument reflect doubts about the efficacy of the argument from Old Testament prophecy? Why does he cite *Old Testament* passages rather than the more direct testimony of the *New Testament*?

## 2. The *adversus Judaeos* tradition and the availability of Old Testament *testimonia*

To understand the prominence of the Old Testament in apologies such as that of Timothy it is useful to recall that, in a missionary and apologetic enterprise that can be traced back to the New Testament itself, Christians had sought to convince Jews that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah of Israel's scriptures and that his career was foretold in those scriptures in considerable detail. Collections of scriptural *testimonia* to the incarnation, ministry, passion, resurrection, and ascension of Christ were made, probably appearing in book form as early as the second century.<sup>(128)</sup>

As has already been mentioned,<sup>(129)</sup> the seventh century A.D. was a period of renewed urgency in the Christian apologetic enterprise with respect to the Jews. The reasons for this are to be sought in the new social and inter-religious configurations brought about by the upheavals of the early seventh century in the eastern provinces of the Byzantine empire: the Sassanian conquest, the campaigns and policies of Heraclius, the final Byzantine collapse and the establishment of Islamic rule.<sup>(130)</sup> The outcome of these upheavals for Christians – and for Melkite Christians in particular – was that they were no longer in a politically privileged position over against their religious rivals, including the Jews, and henceforth would have to rely on *argument*, and not on state power, to defend and promote their religious claims.<sup>(131)</sup> The arguments of this renewed controversy with the Jews are preserved for us in texts such as "The Teaching of Jacob the Newly-baptized,"<sup>(132)</sup> "Questions Addressed to

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128. See DANIELLOU, *Testimonia* (1966), esp. 5–11. Melito of Sardis (d. before 190) probably composed a book of *testimonia*. The oldest such works in our possession are those of Cyprian (written 246–48) and of "pseudo-Gregory of Nyssa" (ca. 400). For a description of these works, see WILLIAMS, *Adversus Judaeos* (1935), 56–64 and 124–31, respectively.

129. See above, pp. 87–88.

130. For the first two items in this list and their effect on Christian–Jewish relations, see DAGRON/DÉROCHE, "Juifs" (1991), 17–43. More generally, see GRIFFITH, "Tract" (1985), 59–60.

131. See the comments of CRONE, "Iconoclasm" (1980), 60–62.

132. Ed. and FT: DAGRON/DÉROCHE, "Juifs" (1991). Dagron (*ibid.*, 247) would date the text some years after 634 (the date given in the text) but before 646–47.

Antiochus the *Dux*,"<sup>(133)</sup> "The Trophies of Damascus,"<sup>(134)</sup> "The Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew,"<sup>(135)</sup> and a number of other works.<sup>(136)</sup> Several of these offer quite extensive catalogues of Old Testament *testimonia* to the mission of Christ, including his passion and death.<sup>(137)</sup>

The *adversus Judaios* tradition and its associated literary form the *testimonia*-catalogue were quick to find their way into Arabic.<sup>(138)</sup> Both "The Teaching of Jacob,"<sup>(139)</sup> and "Questions Addressed to Antiochus the *Dux*"<sup>(140)</sup> were translated into Arabic at an early date, and the catalogue of *testimonia* found as *Quaestio* 137 in the latter work also "migrated" in its Arabic garb to become Book IV of *al-Burhān* of Peter of Bayt Ra's.<sup>(141)</sup> If the attribution can be trusted, Theodore Abū Qurrah composed a catalogue of Old Testament prophecies of Christ's incarnation and career, and of the abolition of Judaism and the entrance of the Gentiles [into the

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133. Ed. and LT: PG 28, 597–710. On this work see BARDY, "Littérature" (1933). CRONE ("Iconoclasm" (1980), 61, note 8) argues for a late seventh-century date on the basis of the content of *Quaestio* 42, while DÉROCHE ("Polémique" (1991), 279) points out that *Quaestio* 137 may have circulated independently before its incorporation into the collection.
134. Ed. and FT: BARDY, "Trophées" (1920). The date of the text is uncertain, but falls in the second half of the seventh century. See DÉROCHE, "Polémique" (1991), 280.
135. Ed. and ET: HAYMAN, *Disputation* (1973). This work dates from the eighth century.
136. On these texts, see WILLIAMS, *Adversus Judaios* (1935), 151–80, and more recently DÉROCHE, "Polémique" (1991), 275–84.
137. Especially important in this regard are passages in "The Teaching of Jacob," esp. I, 23–27, 31–34 and V, 13–15; see DAGRON/DÉROCHE, "Juifs" (1991), 102–21, 202–9) and *Quaestio* 137 of "Questions Addressed to Antiochus the *Dux*" (PG 28, esp. 694–98).
138. For a preliminary listing of Arabic Christian apologetic and polemical works *vis-à-vis* the Jews, see SAMIR, "Terre-Sainte" (1980), 415–16. An important addition to this list is the "Book of the Master and the Pupil" in 43 chapters by the monk Thaddeus of Edessa (GCAL II, 219 (#1)), preserved in Sinai ar. 494 (12th c.), 495 (1022 A.D.), and 499 (11th c.). In the Sinai archive we also find the "Questions Asked by Ibrāhīm of his Uncle, the Teacher Mār Afrām" (GCAL I, 432–33) preserved in Sinai ar. 513 (10th c.), ff. 226<sup>r</sup>–244<sup>r</sup> (in addition to Paris syr. 203 (1470 A.D.), mentioned by Graf).
139. The oldest Arabic witness, Mingana christ. ar. 237, is a single parchment leaf written in what Mingana describes as "an early Christian Kūfī hand of about A.D. 950;" MINGANA, *Catalogue* III (1939), 47. For other manuscripts of the Arabic version of "The Teaching of Jacob," see GCAL I, 372–74, adding Sinai ar. 627 (12th c.), ff. 1<sup>r</sup>–90<sup>r</sup> to Graf's witnesses.
140. The Arabic version is found in several ninth- and tenth-century parchment manuscripts from Sinai, including Sinai ar. 330 (10th c.), ff. 273<sup>v</sup>–283<sup>r</sup> and Sinai ar. NF perg. 17 and 25 (#1) in addition to the parchments mentioned by Graf (GCAL I, 312–13 (#8)): Strass. or. 4226 (885–86 A.D.), ff. 45<sup>v</sup>–59<sup>v</sup> and Sinai ar. 431 (10th c.), ff. 255<sup>r</sup>–321<sup>r</sup>. Later witnesses to be added to Graf's list are Sinai ar. 474, 481 and 485.
141. Ed. CACHIA, *Demonstration* (1960–61), II, 114–32 (#611–32). The identification of the Arabic text was reported in GRAF, "Werk" (1912).

people of God] in the unbelieving Jews' place.<sup>(142)</sup> A similar catalogue is preserved as Chapter 13 of *al-Ġāmi' wuġūh al-īmān*,<sup>(143)</sup> which contains not only prophesies of Christ's incarnation and saving work, but also -- to use the language of the chapter's title -- of the "entry of the Gentiles and the rejection of the Jews."<sup>(144)</sup> From all of this, we see that the *adversus Judaios* tradition, with the literary form of the *testimonia* catalogue in its service, was very much alive for the Christian apologists of the ninth century.

### 3. The Old Testament *testimonia*, the Muslims, and the crucifixion

#### (a) *Muslim-directed apologetics and the testimonia catalogues*

When events obliged Christian apologists to direct their attention to the Muslims, it was entirely natural that they should seek to use the wealth of apologetic material produced in the course of the controversy with the Jews. This "redeployment" of apologetic resources from the Jewish to the Muslim "theater" no doubt seemed all the more natural because of the similarities that Christian apologists thought to discern between Jewish and Islamic belief, similarities that led the catholicos Timothy and others to refer to the Muslims as the "new Jews."<sup>(145)</sup> In particular, Muslims confessed their belief in God's prophets; so why should not Christian arguments from prophecy developed in the encounter with the Jews be equally suitable in the encounter with Muslims?

The Arabic *testimonia* catalogues of Abū Qurrah and of *al-Ġāmi' wuġūh al-īmān* that have just been mentioned plainly fit into the *adversus Judaios* tradition. A result of the "redeployment" of apologetic resources described here, however, is the existence of similar catalogues, scattered throughout the earliest Arabic Christian apologetic literature, which are *not* explicitly and solely directed against the Jews. Notable examples are found among the writings of Abū Qurrah,<sup>(146)</sup> Abū Rā'iṭah,<sup>(147)</sup>

142. For the full title of the work preserved in Sbath (Aleppo?) 1324, pp. 231–41, see above, p. 14, note 62.

143. BL or. 4950, ff. 54<sup>v</sup>–76<sup>r</sup>.

144. شهادات من كتب الله العتيقة والحديثة على . . . دخول الأمم ودفع اليهود; BL or. 4950, ff. 54<sup>v</sup>–55<sup>r</sup>.

145. Thus the catholicos Timothy in his (Syriac) Letter 40 to Sergius; H. CHEIKHO, *Dialectique* (1983), 275 [FT 186] (#7). See also the Syriac version of Athanasius' letter to Maximus; for an Arabic version of the Syriac, see below, pp. 236–38. An excellent discussion of the issues involved here is GRIFFITH, "Jews" (1988).

146. If, that is, the attribution of the list of prophecies in Sbath (Aleppo?) 1324 (pp. 223–30) is correct. See above, pp. 13–14.

147. "Old Testament Witnesses," GRAF, *Abū Rā'iṭa* (1951), 94–104.

Eustathius,<sup>(148)</sup> and Peter of Bayt Ra's.<sup>(149)</sup> The catalogue of Eustathius is of special interest, being neither an independent treatise (as in the case of Abū Qurrah and Abū Rā'īṭah) nor a section within a compilation (as in the case of Peter of Bayt Ra's or the author of *al-Ġāmi'*), but an integral part of a work *addressed to a Muslim*. At the end of his extensive list of Old Testament prophecies to the incarnation and earthly career of Christ, Eustathius vigorously sets out the two possible stances that a person may take with regard to this material:<sup>(150)</sup>

. . . لا، لعمرى، ما يتخلّصه من الإيمان بذلك إلاّ الجحود لما قال الله على  
ألسن أنبيائه المحقّين من قبل. [f. 45<sup>v</sup>] فإن جحدهم، بأنّه لا يؤمن<sup>(1)</sup> بهم،  
فهو كافر متسخّط بما رضي الله! وإن أقرّ به وآمن به، وجب عليه الإقرار  
بالإيمان بكلّ ما<sup>(2)</sup> جاء به من الجها<sup>(3)</sup>ت كلّها.

(1) MS يامن. (2) MS بكلما. (3) MS الجبهة.

#### TRANSLATION:

. . . By my life, there is nothing to deliver him from faith in that [Christian teaching] except the denial of what God has said previously on the tongues of the truthful prophets. If he denies them, in that he does not believe in them, then he is a resentful unbeliever in that with which God is pleased! And if he confirms it and believes in it, then he is obliged to confirm in faith all that has come in it, in all its aspects.

Eustathius' point is clear: those who claim to believe in God's prophets – *as do the Muslims* – ought to pay heed to the Old Testament prophecies (as expounded by the Christians).

#### (b) *Muslim-directed apologetics and the prophecies of the crucifixion*

An important aspect of what God had said through the prophets, for Eustathius, was the prediction of Christ's passion and death. He devotes several pages

148. Mingana chr. ar. 52, ff. 32<sup>r</sup>–46<sup>r</sup>.

149. Book II of *al-Burhān* offers rather detailed typological exegeses of Old Testament passages held to foreshadow the Incarnation and career of Christ; CACHIA, *Demonstration* (1960–61), II, 1–67 (#401–504). Book III is a collection of passages related to Christ, presented without comment in the order in which they appear in the Old Testament; *ibid.*, II, 68–113 (#505–610).

150. Mingana chr. ar. 52, f. 45<sup>r</sup>/14–45<sup>v</sup>/3. Eustathius returns to this theme at ff. 147<sup>v</sup>–148<sup>v</sup>, where he once again stresses the truthfulness and divine mission of the prophets. He asserts that when human beings stand in judgment over prophetic speech the result is the denial of *every* scripture, and complete irreligion.

to a list of Old Testament predictions of the passion,<sup>(151)</sup> and draws attention to the precise correspondence between the Old Testament prophecies and the details of the New Testament passion narratives.<sup>(152)</sup>

Christian apologists had been making use of the Old Testament prophecies of Christ's passion and death in discussions with Muslim long before Eustathius' time, as we learn from two theologians of the early eighth century: the Jacobite stylite John (Yôḥannān) of Litarba (d. ca. 737-38) and the Melkite John of Damascus (d. ca. 750). In the stylite's Syriac debate-report, a clearly Muslim "opponent" attempts to trap the Christian into the admission that God is the source of evil:<sup>(153)</sup>

The opponent said: "Whether Christ died or not, an evil consequence ensues . . . , either for the Jews, or for the prophets. Because if he died, then the Jews disbelieve in him and will be cast away into Hell! But if he did not die, then the prophets lied and their preaching is void!"

The dilemma clearly presupposes a Christian apologetic insistence that the prophets had foretold the death of Christ at the hands of the Jews, a point which the Muslim "opponent" here concedes -- if only for the purposes of the dilemma!

As for John of Damascus, in the chapter on Islam in his *Περὶ Αἱρέσεων* ("Concerning Heresies") he responds to the claim of Muḥammad's prophethood as follows:<sup>(154)</sup>

We say: ". . . Which of the prophets foretold that such a prophet would arise?" And they being at a loss, [we say] . . . that all the prophets in succession, beginning from Moses, prophesied Christ's advent, that Christ is God, that the Son of God would come in the flesh, be crucified, die, and be raised, and will be the Judge of the living and the dead.

A few lines further on, John makes a comment with respect to the divinity of Christ that could equally well apply to the reality of his crucifixion: "[T]his is what the prophets and the scripture have handed down; and you, as you strongly insist, accept the prophets!"<sup>(155)</sup>

The texts of the theologians of Litarba and Damascus strongly suggest that the earliest Christian response to Muslim denials of the reality of the crucifixion was an

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151. Ibid., ff. 40<sup>v</sup>–43<sup>r</sup>. His list includes: Zechariah 9:9–10; Psalm 72:6,8; Zechariah 11:12; "Jeremiah" (Matthew 27:9–10); Psalm 109:8 (on Judas's betrayal); Jeremiah 11:19; Isaiah 53:7–8; Psalm 22:16–18, 6–8; "Jeremiah" (Isaiah 50:6); "Isaiah" (Joel 3:15–16); Psalm 69:21; Isaiah 52:8b–10, 53:5; Daniel 9:26; and Ezekiel 47:2, 8–9 (on the water that flowed from Christ's pierced right side).

152. Drawing on the appropriate New Testament passages, Eustathius frequently asserts that Christ accepted suffering and death *in order to fulfill the prophecies*. See, for example, *ibid.*, f. 51<sup>r</sup>/4–7 (with reference to Matthew 26:53–54); 85<sup>v</sup>/8–13 (Luke 18:31–33); and 99<sup>r</sup>–<sup>v</sup> (Matthew 5:17, Romans 10:4, John 19:28–30, Luke 24:44).

153. From the Syriac text in SUERMANN, "Jôhannān" (1988–89), 211.

154. KOTTER, *Liber* (1981), 61–62 (lines 33–41).

155. Ibid., 63 (lines 63–64).

emphasis on the Old Testament prophecies -- which of course could be found in a convenient form in any of a number of *testimonia* catalogues.

(c) *Caution in the use of the Old Testament*

As we progress through the eighth century, however, we discern a developing caution with regard to the use of the Old Testament prophecies. As we have seen, in the dialogue of Timothy and al-Mahdī (from ca. 781) the catholicos relies on the Old Testament only for a single step in his argument: to show that Christ's death, the actual past occurrence of which had been proved by *Qur'ānic* argument, was death by crucifixion. And a few years later (ca. 788), the anonymous Melkite author of the oldest dated Arabic Christian apologetic text in our possession, *Fī taṭlīṭ Allāh al-wāḥid* of Sinai ar. 154, introduced his discussion of the cross as follows:<sup>(156)</sup>

- 1 وهذا ما تنبأ<sup>(1)</sup> أنبياء الله على صُلب المسيح، الذي فدا[نا به] من ضلالة إبليس وأعماله:  
 2 تنبأ موسى، الذي كلمه الله وضرّم وجهه، حين لم يكن<sup>(2)</sup> يستطيع أن ينظر إلى وجهه أحد من بني إسرائيل. 3 تنبأ على صُلب المسيح، وقال [f. 137<sup>v</sup>] لبني إسرائيل في التوراة التي أنزلها الله عليه: «لترون حياتكم معلّقة مقابل أعينكم، ولا تؤمنون بها». 4 فأَيّ حياة علّقت مقابل أعين بني إسرائيل، ولم يؤمنوا بها، إلّا نور الله؟  
 5 فافهم ما تنبأ الأنبياء بروح القدس على المسيح، الذي صُلب، وصَلَبَ الخطيّة وأهلك إبليس بصلّبه.

(1) MS اتنبأ. (2) MS يكون.

TRANSLATION:

1 And this is what the prophets of God prophesied concerning the crucifixion of Christ, through which he redeemed us from the misguidance of the Devil and his works:

2 Moses prophesied, to whom God spoke and caused his face to blaze [so that] none of the Children of Israel were then able to look at his face. 3 He prophesied concerning the crucifixion of Christ and said to the children of Israel in the *Tawrah*, which God sent down to him: "You shall see your life hanging before your eyes, and you shall not believe" [Deuteronomy 28:66, LXX]<sup>(157)</sup> 4 What life was hanging before the eyes of the children of Israel, in which they did not believe, other than the Light of God?

5 So understand what the prophets have prophesied by the Holy Spirit concerning Christ, who was crucified, and who by his crucifixion crucified sin and destroyed the Devil.

156. Sinai ar. 154, ff. 137<sup>r</sup>/11–137<sup>v</sup>/9. F. 137<sup>r</sup> is unfortunately rather badly faded.

157. The use of the Septuagint version of Deuteronomy 28:66 as a prophecy of the cross is first attested in Melito of Sardis, and frequently thereafter. See DANIELÉLOU, "Leben" (1960).

The author then goes on to discuss another Pentateuchal passage which was understood as a prophecy of Christ's crucifixion, the story of the bronze serpent in the wilderness (Numbers 21:6-9).<sup>(158)</sup>

This text is interesting because the author does not simply reproduce the most familiar and most frequently cited Old Testament prophecies of the crucifixion of Christ (such as Timothy's citations from David (Psalms), Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Zechariah), but limits himself to passages from the Pentateuch. He has good reasons for this. Intent upon crafting a recommendation of the prophecies he cites to Muslims inclined to deny the Christian interpretation of their content, the Christian apologist stresses that the prophecies are those of the prophet *Moses*,<sup>(159)</sup> to whom God spoke directly – one thinks of *al-Nisā'* (4):164, *وَكَلَّمَ اللَّهُ مُوسَى تَكْلِيمًا*, ("and unto Moses God spoke directly") -- and to whom God sent down (*anzala*) the *Tawrāh*.<sup>(160)</sup> The Muslim should therefore, according to the author, be prepared to accept these prophecies, and hence to accept the reality of Christ's crucifixion: "So understand what the prophets have prophesied by the Holy Spirit concerning Christ, *who was crucified*."

As another example, we may mention Abū Qurrah's Muslim-directed set of linked treatises, "On the Necessity of Redemption," "On the Possibility of the Incarnation," and "On the Divinity of the Son," which dates from the late eighth or early ninth century. In "On the Necessity of Redemption," Abū Qurrah *first* argues for the necessity of Christ's suffering and death on the basis of what he takes to be teachings common to Christians and Muslims because of their presence in the Law "sent down" to Moses.<sup>(161)</sup> Only when the argument is complete does he cite Isaiah 50:5-6 and 53:2-7, Psalm 22:16-18, and Zechariah 12:10, concluding: "All the prophets mentioned his pains, through which took place the salvation of the world."<sup>(162)</sup> Similarly, in "On the Divinity of the Son," it is only after he has presented arguments from *al-'aql*, reason, that Abū Qurrah states that "in addition to all this and better"<sup>(163)</sup> is the proof of the Son's divinity, incarnation, and redemptive work from the prophecies of the Old Testament, readily available from either the Christians or the Jews.<sup>(164)</sup>

It is, on the one hand, perfectly clear that Christian apologists did make use of Old Testament prophecies of the passion in their arguments for the historicity and

158. Sinai ar. 154, ff. 137<sup>v</sup>–139<sup>r</sup>.

159. One is reminded here of the earliest Muslim-Christian religious discussion for which we have a text, that between the patriarch John (called "of the *sedrās*") of Antioch and the governor of Ḥimṣ 'Umayr b. Sa'd in 644. In this discussion, the Muslim insisted that the Christian confine himself to citations from *Moses*. NAU, "Colloque" (1915), 250/23–251/1.

160. Note the author's precise use of the Qur'ānic vocabulary of revelation; cf. *al-Mā'idah* (5):44, *al-An'ām* (6):91, etc.

161. See below, pp. 212–16.

162. الأنبياء كلهم قد ذكروا أوجاعه التي بها كان خلاص العالم; BACHA, *Mayāmīr* (1904), 86–87.

163. مع هذا كله وأفضل من هذا; *ibid.*, 98/6.

164. *Ibid.*, lines 4–8. Abū Qurrah goes on to mention the New Testament as well.

necessity of Christ's death by crucifixion. As late as the mid-ninth century, Eustathius was prepared to make a case for why Muslims ought to be responsive to arguments from Old Testament prophecy, and to fill pages with prophecies of the passion. At the very least, such arguments would have been useful in addressing Christians whose faith had been shaken by Muslim claims, or who were tempted away from the faith by the improved socio-economic opportunities opened up to converts to Islam in the Abbasid period. *Testimonia* catalogues may well have served to impress such wavering Christians with the intra-systemic coherence of the Christian biblical/dogmatic understanding of reality – an understanding to which the crucifixion of Christ is central. And therefore the Christian apologists of this study, when speaking of the crucifixion, seldom neglect to mention the witness of the prophets, if only in passing. Even the author of "The Refutation of the One Who Denies the Crucifixion," who relies almost entirely on Qur'ānic arguments in his defence of the crucifixion's historicity, introduces his final summary with these words: "The prophecies testified beforehand to . . . his crucifixion."<sup>(165)</sup>

On the other hand, however, we have noted that several Christian apologists, when discussing the crucifixion, use the Old Testament prophecies in a cautious and circumscribed way. Timothy appeals to the Old Testament only to establish the *manner* of Christ's death, the *fact* of it having been established by a Qur'ānic argument. The anonymous Melkite author of *Fī taṭlīṭ Allāh al-wāḥid* limits himself to prophecies from the Pentateuch, introduced by a biblical/Qur'ānic argument for the authority of Moses. In his treatise on redemption, Abū Qurrah cites the prophets Isaiah, David and Zechariah more to illustrate the consistency and connectedness of the scriptures and the Christian understanding of reality based upon them than to prove the historicity of the events of salvation history. Later on, in his treatise on the divinity of the Son, Abū Qurrah turns to the scriptures only after completing his arguments from reason.

This caution is readily explained. Already Timothy had to confront the claims that the text of the Christian and Jewish scriptures had been corrupted,<sup>(166)</sup> and that, in spite of their corruption, prophecies of *Muḥammad* could still be discerned in these scriptures.<sup>(167)</sup> Christian apologists quickly learned that the use of the Old (or the New) Testament in any given *locus* of discussion was likely to lead to debate about entirely different *loci*: the corruption (*tahrīf*) of the Christians' scripture, or the prophecies of *Muḥammad* allegedly found therein.

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165. والنَّبَوَاتُ مِنْ قَبْلِ شَهَدَاتٍ عَلَى ذَلِكَ، أَي، عَلَى صَلْبِهِ see below, p. 306 (#16).

166. See, conveniently, PUTMAN/SAMIR, *Église* (1975), 26\* (#124–29), 47\*–51\* (#248–72) (and parallels in the other recensions of the text).

167. *Ibid.*, 23\*–25\* (#102–21), 27\*–30\* (#134–53), 43\*–44\* (#228–37) (and parallels). A major part of the *Kitāb al-dīn wa-l-dawlah* of 'Alī al-Ṭabarī is taken up with the prophecies of *Muḥammad* found in the Christian scriptures.

(d) *Excursus 1: Is Christ cursed? On Deuteronomy 21:23*

Several Muslim polemicists who searched the Old Testament, whether in search of evidence of *tahrīf* or of prophecies of Muḥammad, took note of Deuteronomy 21:23: "a crucified man is accursed by God."<sup>(168)</sup> Eustathius reports the naturally-occurring question in its most straightforward form: "How do they [the Christians] take pride in his crucifixion, when in the *Tawrāh* it is written, 'Everyone who is crucified is accursed?'"<sup>(169)</sup> The author of the "Letter of 'Umar" worked Christian claims of Christ's agency in revelation into his question for greater rhetorical effect, asking: "You have claimed that 'Īsā sent Moses and revealed to him the *Tawrāh*. But you find in the *Tawrāh* that 'the one crucified is accursed.' Did 'Īsā then curse himself?"<sup>(170)</sup> 'Alī al-Ṭabarī became aware of the verse as it is cited by the apostle Paul in Galatians 3:13, and made the (rather confused) claim in his *al-Radd 'alā l-Naṣārā* that "in his letters he cursed Christ unambiguously!"<sup>(171)</sup>

Since the question had occupied Christian thinkers practically from Christianity's dawn, as we see from Galatians 3, Arabic Christian apologists had little trouble in dealing with it. Eustathius responded to the effect that the curse only applies to the wrongdoer crucified for his wrongdoing; as for the one crucified *innocently*, the curse falls upon those who put him to death despite his innocence.<sup>(172)</sup> An interesting detail in the discussion is Eustathius' observation that although the serpent was cursed in the creation story (Genesis 3:14-15), its image (*miṭāl*) was salvation to the children of Israel from the serpents' sting (Numbers 21:4-9). Just so, the crucifixion of Christ (who, Eustathius no doubt intends, was in his crucifixion the *miṭāl* of one cursed) was the salvation of the world from Satan's sting.<sup>(173)</sup>

Another discussion of Deuteronomy 21:23 and Galatians 3:13 is to be found in Chapter 7 of *al-Ġāmī' wuḡūh al-īmān*,<sup>(174)</sup> which is part of the author's discussion of the salvific motives for the Incarnation. The author, who here is not writing a direct response to a Muslim questioner, closely follows St. Paul's argument in Galatians. Human beings are unable to do *all* that which is demanded in the Law, and thus are under a curse (Deuteronomy 27:46; Galatians 3:10). But Christ, himself blameless, enters into "definition as a curse" (*ḥadd al-la'nah*) in order to save us from the curse.<sup>(175)</sup>

168. This verse had previously been used by Jews in disputes with Christians, already by Trypho in Justin's "Dialogue with Trypho" LXXXIX,2, XC,1 (ARCHAMBAULT, *Dialogue* (1909), II, 80–83), and more recently in the eighth-century "Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew," V,1 (HAYMAN, *Disputation* (1973), 9 [ET II]).

169. كيف يفتخرون بصلبه، وفي التوراة مكتوب «إِنَّ كُلَّ مَصْلُوبٍ مَلْعُونٌ»؟ Mingana chr. ar. 52, f. 151<sup>r</sup>/11–13.

170. وزعمتم أَنَّ عيسى بعث موسى وأنزل عليه التوراة؛ وأنتم تجدون في التوراة أَنَّ كُلَّ مَصْلُوبٍ مَلْعُونٌ. أفيلعن عيسى نفسه؟ SOURDEL, "Pamphlet" (1966), 27/3–4.

171. إِنَّهُ فِي رَسَائِلِهِ لَعَنَ الْمَسِيحَ صِرَاحًا؛ MURQUS ĠIRĠIS, *Ṣaḥā'ih* (1927–28), 106/20.

172. Mingana chr. ar. 52, ff. 151<sup>r</sup>–152<sup>r</sup>.

173. Ibid., ff. 151<sup>v</sup>/14 – 152<sup>r</sup>/5.

174. BL or. 4950, ff. 32<sup>r</sup>–34<sup>r</sup>, ed. MA'LŪF, "Aqdam al-maḥṭūṭāt" (1903), 1017–19.

(e) *Excursus II: The testimonies of the pagan sages*

Before leaving this discussion of the Old Testament prophecies to the career of Christ, including his passion and death, we may take note of Arabic Christian texts where we find lists of prophecies not only from the Jewish prophets, but also from *the pagan sages*. Thus, for example, in the (11th c.?) rhymed Nestorian compilation *al-Mağdal*, the chapter on the cross includes a section "from the prophecies of the sages of the pagans to the crucifixion before its occurrence."<sup>(176)</sup>

I do not find any evidence that these prophecies played a significant role in Christian-Muslim controversy over the crucifixion in the eighth and ninth centuries, although it is not difficult to imagine Christians familiar with the Greek literary and philosophical heritage attempting to exploit any promising material in conversations with Muslim colleagues. In any event, at least one Arabic recension of "The Wisdom of Sibyl" ("Arab. III") did circulate within the arabophone Christian community as early as the second decade of the ninth century, and others may have been in circulation earlier still. They no doubt played a role in shoring up the faith of Christians, reassuring them that the redemptive career of "the one who was hung upon the cross" (*allāḍī 'ulliqa 'alā l-ṣalīb / l-ḥašaba / l-ūd*, as the various recensions of "The Wisdom of Sibyl" constantly call Christ) had been foreseen by divinely-gifted men and women throughout the world.<sup>(177)</sup>

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175. Compare this with Abū Qurrah's "On the Necessity of Redemption," discussed below, pp. 211–23.

176. ومن نبوءات حكماء الحنفاء قبل كونه, Vatican ar. 108, f. 118<sup>r</sup> or Paris ar. 190, p. 287. See also the list of prophecies of the Greek sages in Sinai ar. 553, ff. 8<sup>r</sup>–30<sup>v</sup>, a text of uncertain date.

177. See SCHLEIFER, *Sibylle* (1908), 23, 25, 27 (esp. #7d–e).

#### 4. Arguments from the New Testament and Christian tradition

##### (a) *The witness of the apostles*

The existence of a rich Christian apologetic tradition *vis-à-vis* the Jews and the possibility of its "redeployment" in controversy with the "new Jews" results, for the Christian literature studied here, in the Old Testament being cited far more often than the New Testament in defence of the historicity of the crucifixion. Appeals to the veracity of the apostolic witness are not absent from this literature, however. One such appeal is found in the debate of Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī, in a response to the emir 'Abd al-Raḥman al-Hāšimī who had denied the historicity of the crucifixion of Jesus, citing the *šubbiha lahum* of *al-Nisā'* (4):157.<sup>(178)</sup> Equating *šubbiha li* with *aškala 'alā* ("was problematic, ambiguous for"), Ibrāhīm allows that Christ's crucifixion was indeed something problematic or ambiguous – *for his crucifiers*.<sup>(179)</sup> But he goes on to deny in the strongest possible terms that the matter could have been problematic or ambiguous for the disciples:<sup>(180)</sup>

... لأن الرسل قالوا إنهم عاينوه مصلوباً؛ وذاق الموت ودُفن، وقام بعد ثلاثة أيام، وأتاهم مراراً بعد قيامته وكلمهم، ومكث على الأرض بعد قيامته أربعين يوماً، وطلع إلى السماء أمامهم، وعاينوه صاعداً.  
فكيف يكون «شبه لهم»، أو يُتهم الرسل بالكذب، ونبئك يشهد عليهم أنهم «أنصار الله»، ولم ينطقوا إلا بما لقنهم روح القدس الذي أرسل إليهم الله؟

##### TRANSLATION:

... because the apostles said that with their own eyes they saw him crucified; and he tasted death and was buried, and rose after three days, came to them several times after his resurrection and spoke with them, remained upon the earth after his resurrection forty days, and went up into heaven before them, and they saw him ascending with their own eyes.

So how can it be that "it was doubtful to them" (*šubbiha lahum*), or that the apostles should be accused of falsehood, when your prophet bears witness concerning them that they are the "helpers of God" (*anṣār Allāh*), and they said nothing except that inspired in them by the Holy Spirit, whom God sent to them?

It is the *Qur'ān* that calls Christ's disciples "helpers of God" (*Āl 'Imrān* (3):52, *al-Ṣaff* (61):14), and therefore Muslims ought to heed their witness to the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ.

Such an argument could easily be extended into an attempt to prove the truth

178. MARCUZZO, *Dialogue* (1986), 390–91 (#276–77).

179. *Ibid.* (#278).

180. *Ibid.*, 391, 393 (#280–83).

of the gospels, and indeed of Christianity, in general. The fragment "On the Sufferings of Our Lord Christ" in Sinai ar. 553 contains a description of the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ,<sup>(181)</sup> at the end of which the author states that all this is found in the books of the truthful witnesses (*al-ṣuhūd al-muḥiqqīn*). He then adds:<sup>(182)</sup>

الشاهد لهم المخالفون،<sup>(1)</sup>  
لَمَّا سَمَوْهُمْ «أَنْصَارَ اللَّهِ».  
وَسَمَّى صَاحِبُهَا النِّصْرَانِيَّةَ فِي كِتَابِهِ  
«دِينَ اللَّهِ» وَ«دِينَ الْحَقِّ»،  
وَسَمَّى الْإِنْجِيلَ الطَّاهِرَ الزَّاهِرَ  
«نُورَ وَهْدَى لِلْمُتَّقِينَ»،<sup>(2)</sup> وَالصَّائِمِينَ الْقَانِعِينَ،  
وَالْمُصَلِّينَ،<sup>(3)</sup> وَالْأَمْرِينَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ، وَالَّذِينَ  
«نَفِضَ أَعْيُنُهُمْ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ مِمَّا عَرَفُوا مِنَ الْحَقِّ».

(1) MS المخالفين. (2) MS للمتقين. (3) MS المصلين.

#### TRANSLATION:

The witness to them [Christ's disciples as "truthful witnesses"]  
is the opponents when they called them "helpers of God."  
In his book, their master [Muḥammad] called Christianity  
"the religion of God" and "the religion of truth,"  
and called the pure, radiant Gospel "light and guidance  
to the godfearing," [cf. *al-Mā'idah* (5):46]  
to those who fast contentedly,  
to those who pray,  
to those who command the good,  
and to those whose "eyes overflow with tears because of  
the truth they recognize" [*al-Mā'idah* (5):83].

#### (b) *The concurrence of the Jews*

A further argument made by the Christian apologists is that the Jewish authorities were *also* eyewitnesses to the crucifixion, and that the Jews had always acknowledged the fact of the crucifixion of Christ. The apologists considered this agreement in the matter of Christ's crucifixion – an agreement *despite* the rivalry between Christians and Jews – as telling evidence for its historicity. At the very end

181. Sinai ar. 553, f. 36<sup>r-v</sup>.

182. Ibid., f. 36<sup>v</sup>/5–10.

of "The Refutation of the One Who Denies the Crucifixion," for example, we read:<sup>(183)</sup>

The Jews acknowledge their deed, and the partisans [of Christ] believed [in it] inasmuch as they were eyewitnesses; and the eyewitness is a witness to himself. [Therefore] there is no path of obstinacy for the person who is truthful in his speech.

This argument appears to have gained a hearing in certain Muslim "heretical" circles, for it is repeated by Ibn al-Rāwandī and Abū Zakariyā' al-Rāzī in their critiques of the Qur'ān.<sup>(184)</sup>

### (c) *The witness of place*

In the mid-fourth century, Bishop Cyril of Jerusalem, addressing catechumens, had exploited the role that *places* may play in preserving historical memory. In response to those who said that "the Cross is only an illusion (δόκησις)" and that "Christ was crucified in fancy (κατὰ φαντασίαν) only,"<sup>(185)</sup> the bishop could point to Gethsemane, the Mount of Olives, the house of Caiphas, Golgotha, and the sepulchre as being among the witnesses (μαρτυρίαί) of the passion of Christ.<sup>(186)</sup> Continuing this Palestinian Christian tradition, Bishop Peter of Bayt Ra's (or one of his sources) lists among the spiritual "medicines and ointments"<sup>(187)</sup> left us by Christ "his vestiges and the places of his holiness in the world":<sup>(188)</sup> particular churches, shrines, holy places, and relics, each of which is said to "bear witness to" events in the life of Christ and in that of the earliest church.<sup>(189)</sup> These include the Church of the Mount of Olives (bearing witness to Christ's entry into Jerusalem), the church of Mount Zion (bearing witness to the Last Supper), and the Church of the Resurrection, with the site of Calvary (bearing witness to Christ's crucifixion).<sup>(190)</sup>

### (d) *The True Cross*

The mention of "relics" in the last paragraph demands a special mention of the wood of the True Cross. Again, for Cyril of Jerusalem the wood of the cross, "now distributed piecemeal from Jerusalem over all the world," is a prime witness to the

183. See below, p. 306 (#16).

184. See below, pp. 141–42.

185. *Cat.* XIII, 37 (*PG* 33, 816 [ET McCauley/Stephenson, *Cyril* (1969–70), II, 29]).

186. *Cat.* X,19 and XIII,38–40 (*PG* 33, 685–88, 817–21 [ET McCauley/Stephenson, *Cyril* (1969–70), I, 209; II, 29–31]). On the importance of these witnesses in Cyril's thought and teaching, see WALKER, *City* (1990), 330–34.

187. الأديوية والمراهم; CACHIA, *Demonstration* (1960–61), I, 151 (#273). Baptism and the Eucharist head the list.

188. آثاره وأماكن قدسه في الدنيا; *ibid.*, I, 165 (#310).

189. The standard formula in this list is: تشهد كنيسة . . . بـ . . . ("The church of . . . bears witness to . . ."); *ibid.*, I, 166 ff. (#311, 312, 313 etc.).

190. *Ibid.*, I, 176–80 (#332–35, 338–39).

historicity of Christ's crucifixion.<sup>(191)</sup> At the time of the Arab invasion of Palestine, however, the relic of the True Cross in Jerusalem was removed by the Byzantines to Constantinople. It is hardly surprising, then, that for Bishop Peter of Bayt Ra's the relic *par excellence* is not the (inaccessible) remains of the True Cross, but rather the sacred *mandylion* of Edessa.<sup>(192)</sup> But despite the inaccessibility of the True Cross, Christians living in Muslim-dominated Palestine retained vivid memories of it, to judge from the literature about it that came into Arabic at an early date.<sup>(193)</sup>

(e) *Comments*

Most twentieth-century Christians would begin an argument for the historicity of the crucifixion with the sorts of evidence listed above: sources claiming to preserve eyewitness accounts, the historical consensus of the communities involved, ancient local tradition, material artifacts. However, arguments based on such evidence are *not* common in the literature we are studying, most likely for reasons that are of a piece with those already discussed with respect to the apologetic use of the Old Testament. Christian apologists soon learned that historical arguments for the reality of the crucifixion based on the New Testament and church tradition simply did not work very well in debate with Muslim scholars, since these arguments immediately came into conflict with developing Islamic notions about the corruption or *tahrīf* of the Christian scriptures and with a sophisticated and specifically Islamic methodology for establishing the truth of reports from the past.<sup>(194)</sup> It was not long before Muslim polemicists were practicing a kind of biblical criticism, taking note of inconsistencies and contradictions in the gospels, also with respect to the passion narrative. Already 'Alī al-Ṭabarī in his *al-Radd 'alā l-Naṣarā* and a Muslim questioner to whom the monk Eustathius responded asked whether *both* thieves crucified with Jesus reviled him (as in Matthew 27:44), or just one of the two (as in Luke 23:39-43).<sup>(195)</sup> Later

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191. Cat. XIII,4 (PG 33, 776-77 [ET McCauley/Stephenson, *Cyril* (1969-70), II, 6]). Also, see WALKER, *City* (1990), 258-60.

192. CACHIA, *Demonstration* (1960-61), I, 162 (#384).

193. See above, p. 78, note 87.

194. See, for example, the *Kitāb al-dīn wa-l-dawlah* of 'Alī al-Ṭabarī, who compares the direct, familial channels of witness concerning Muḥammad that Muslims enjoy to the irregular channels through which Christians have received their reports concerning Christ; 'ĀDIL NUWAYHID, *Dīn* (1979), 204 [ET MINGANA, *Defence* (1922), 162].

For a general introduction to Islamic hadith-criticism see ROBSON, "Ḥadīth" (1971) and "Djarḥ" (1965). The date of the beginning of a concern for proper *isnāds* is a matter of dispute — see JUYNBOLL, *Tradition* (1983), 17-21, or SHAUKAT, "Isnād" (1985) — but certainly falls within the first Islamic century. The first systematic *isnād* critic appears to have been Šu'bah b. al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ (d. 777); JUYNBOLL, *Tradition* (1983), 20.

195. For 'Alī, see MURQUS ĠIRĠIS, *Ṣaḥā'ih* (1927-28), 115/20-116/6. For Eustathius' interlocutor, see Mingana chr. ar. 52, f. 74<sup>r</sup>/6-8. The response of Eustathius (and of al-Ṣafī b. al-'Assāl, in whose response 'Alī's question is preserved) is that the one thief reviled Jesus at first, but then repented;

Muslim polemicists, following this lead, would devote considerable space to a critique of the gospel accounts of the passion.<sup>(196)</sup>

(f) *Excursus: Three days and three nights?*

Another contradiction in the gospels brought up by Muslim questioners concerns Jesus' saying about the "sign of Jonah": "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 11:40). How can the three days and three nights of the saying be reconciled with Christ's (alleged) death on Friday and his resurrection early Sunday morning? Thanks to a citation in the *al-Ṣaḥā'ih fī ḡawāb al-naṣā'ih* of al-Ṣafī b. al-ʿAssāl, we know that ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī included this question in the chapter of his *Radd* dealing with contradictions between the gospels. According to al-Ṣafī, ʿAlī had written: "Christ did not remain in the earth three days, as he had said."<sup>(197)</sup>

Chapter 17 of *al-Ġāmiʿ wuḡūh al-īmān* is a list of responses to thirty-three questions of the sort typically asked by Muslims about particular texts in the gospels. Question 28<sup>(198)</sup> is the one raised by ʿAlī: how are the three days and three nights of the Jonah saying to be completed? The response of the author of *al-Ġāmiʿ* is complex, involving three presuppositions: (i) On the basis of Genesis 2:17b ("in the day that you eat of it you shall die") and the subsequent story of the fall (Adam ate and did *not* die, at least not physically), there is a sense in which a person can be alive and dead at once. (ii) According to Genesis 1:5b ("there was evening and there was morning, one day") and parallels, a full "day" runs from evening to evening. (iii) Christ rose from the dead toward dawn on Easter Sunday. The author of *al-Ġāmiʿ* now argues that one begins the count of three days and three nights *at the Last Supper on Thursday evening*, when Christ gave his apostles his body to eat and his blood to drink. From that time, Christ considered himself among the dead.<sup>(199)</sup> Counting from Thursday evening to dawn on Sunday morning yields three nights by the standard reckoning, but also three "days" – where a "day" is a twenty-four hour period or any part thereof, not necessarily a period of daylight.

The author proceeds to turn his attention to the explanations of "some people" who would attempt to complete the count of three days and three nights by counting the darkness from the sixth to the ninth hour of Good Friday (Matthew 27:45, Mark 15:33, Luke 23:44) as a night. For the author of *al-Ġāmiʿ*, such an expedient does not

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ibid. ff. 100<sup>v</sup>–101<sup>r</sup>.

196. See, for example, *al-Fiṣal* of Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064) (IBN HAZM, *Fiṣal* (1928–30), II, 42–44); or *Šifāʾ al-ḡalīl* of al-Ġuwaynī (d. 1085) (ALLARD, *Textes* (1968), 74–81).

197. إِنَّ الْمَسِيحَ لَمْ يُقَمِّ فِي الْأَرْضِ ثَلَاثَةَ أَيَّامٍ، كَمَا قَالَ MURQUS ĠIRĠIS, *Ṣaḥā'ih* (1927–28), 114/20.

198. BL or. 4950, ff. 110<sup>v</sup>–112<sup>r</sup>.

199. وَمِنْ لَيْلَتِهِ تِلْكَ، كَانَ عِنْدَ نَفْسِهِ فِي فِكْرِهِ بَيْنَ الْمَوْتَى<sup>a</sup> ibid., f. 111<sup>r</sup>/4–5.

solve the problems involved. If one counts from the beginning of the darkness on Friday to dawn on Sunday, one day (i.e., a daylight period) is lacking from the total. The count does come out correctly if one begins earlier, that is, with the daylight period before the onset of darkness at the sixth hour, but the author of *al-Ġāmi'* finds this interpretation forced in comparison to his own proposal which neatly provides for three full nights and two and a half 24-hour periods, naturally counted as three "days." Furthermore, he believes that such explanations are flatly contradicted by the well-known and much-cited prophecies of the darkness at Christ's crucifixion, Amos 8:9 and Zechariah 14:6-7, which speak of events "on that day." The author of *al-Ġāmi'* insists that "that day" is not to be construed as two days and a night!

This argument is an interesting contribution to a discussion which had involved several Greek and Syriac fathers of the Church. "Some people" who began the count from the sixth hour of Friday, counting the darkness from the sixth to the ninth hour as a night, include Origen<sup>(200)</sup> and John of Damascus,<sup>(201)</sup> who counted the uncreated light of the resurrection itself as the third "day." Others who began the count with the daylight before the sixth hour on Friday include Origen again, the *Didascalía*, Ephraim the Syrian, and Epiphanius of Salamis.<sup>(202)</sup> That the calculation should begin with the Last Supper is the contribution of Aphrahat "the Persian sage" and Gregory of Nyssa. Aphrahat and Gregory, however, both counted the darkness on Friday afternoon as a night so as to yield three periods of darkness and three of light between the Last Supper and Saturday evening, held to be the time of the resurrection in accordance with Matthew 28:1a.<sup>(203)</sup>

Two elements of the explanation of *al-Ġāmi'* are, to the best of my knowledge, original: (i) its critique of a large part of the exegetical tradition on the basis of texts such as Amos 8:9 and Zechariah 14:6; and, related to this, (ii) its use of Genesis 1:5b in order to define a full "day" as the period from evening to evening, in contrast to Gregory of Nyssa or John of Damascus, who had used Genesis 1:5a ("God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night") in order to justify counting a (three-hour) period of darkness as a "night."<sup>(204)</sup> The greatest weakness of the explanation of *al-Ġāmi'*, from the standpoint of the patristic tradition, is its assumption that Christ rose toward dawn on Sunday morning; in general, the fathers assumed that the ὁψὲ σαββάτων of Matthew 28:1 meant that the resurrection took place not on Sunday morning, but on Saturday evening, at or shortly after nightfall.<sup>(205)</sup> There was never full unanimity, however, with regard to the time of the resurrection.

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200. See DROBNER, "Calculation" (1981), 267–68.

201. In his *Oratio in Sabbatum Sanctum*; KOTTER, *Opera* (1988), 135–36 (#26) [IT SPINELLI, *Omēlie* (1980), 103–5].

202. For details and full references, see DROBNER, "Calculation" (1981), 267–68.

203. *Ibid.*, 264–66, 269–71.

204. Gregory: *ibid.*, 264. John: KOTTER, *Opera* (1988), 135 [IT SPINELLI, *Omēlie* (1980), 104].

205. *Ibid.*, 265, 269.

Eustathius, responding to a claim of contradiction between the gospels on this point,<sup>(206)</sup> responded: "That time is unknown. No creature knows it at all, and no tongue has mentioned it."<sup>(207)</sup>

## 5. A summary

There can be no doubt that the Christian apologists studied here accepted the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the fundamental authority for their faith. The authority of the scriptures is often stated explicitly,<sup>(208)</sup> their integrity is cunningly defended,<sup>(209)</sup> and their contents are cited without embarrassment. And yet, Scripture tends to play a supportive rather than a leading role in the defence of the historicity of the death of Christ by crucifixion. Christian apologists learned that the Old Testament *testimonia*-catalogues which had developed in the context of Church's controversy with the Jews could not simply and unproblematically be reapplied to the Church's controversy with the Muslims. These "new Jews" not only had their own scripture, but very quickly developed their own criteria of scriptural authenticity and their own canons of historical inquiry -- criteria and canons which called all biblically-grounded Christian arguments into question. The response of Christian apologists to this situation was varied, but many of them decided that the most effective scriptural arguments for the death of Christ were *ad hoc* arguments drawn from the *Muslims'* scripture, the Qur'ān. Biblical citations played a secondary role, filling in details, illustrating, and – perhaps most importantly – giving a sense of the thickness and intricacy of weave of the Christian tapestry of reality.

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206. Mingana chr. ar. 52, f. 74<sup>r</sup>/8–10. 'Alī al-Ṭabarī also perceived a contradiction here; see the response of al-Ṣafī b. al-'Assāl to 'Alī's *al-Radd 'alā l-Naṣārā*, MURQUS ĠIRĠIS, *Ṣaḥā'ih* (1927–28), 114/2–4.

207. وَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ الْوَقْتُ غَيْرُ مَفْهُومٍ، وَلَا يَفْهَمُهُ أَحَدٌ مِنَ الْمَخْلُوقِينَ قَطْ، وَلَا ذَكَرَهُ لِسَانٌ Mingana chr. ar. 52, f. 101<sup>v</sup>/5–7.

208. For example, in the course of his defence of the Trinity Abū Qurrah wrote: النِّصْرَانِيَّةُ إِنَّمَا هِيَ الْإِيمَانُ بِالْإِنْجِيلِ وَتَوَابِعِهِ وَنَامُوسِ مُوسَى وَمَا بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ مِنْ كُتُبِ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ ("Christianity is nothing but faith in the Gospel and that which follows it and the Law of Moses and the books of the prophets that are in between them"); BACHA, *Mayāmīr* (1904), 27/7–8.

209. See especially the defence of 'Ammār al-Baṣrī against the charge of *tahrīf*, in both the *Kitāb al-burhān*, Ch. 4 (HAYEK, *Apologie* (1977), 41\*–46\*, and see below, pp. 563–68) and the *Kitāb al-masā'il wa-l-aḡwibah*, II,5 (ibid., 130\*–35\*).

### C. The Issue of *tašbīh*

### 1. Timothy's debate, III<sup>(210)</sup>

According to the Syriac report of their conversation, the caliph al-Mahdi responded to Timothy's recital of Old Testament predictions of the crucifixion by saying "He [God] made a likeness for them in this way,"<sup>(211)</sup> virtually a repetition of his earlier citation of *al-Nisā'* (4):157 and its *šubbiha lahum*.<sup>(212)</sup> The caliph appears to have had an understanding of the *šubbiha lahum* broad enough not only to accommodate explanations of Christ's escape from crucifixion, but also to be a response to Christian claims that the Old Testament predicts the passion of Christ. For the caliph, it seems, *all* evidence which Christians might advance to support their claim that Christ was crucified is but *tašbih*, an appearance with no basis in reality.

Timothy responded to the caliph's objection with a dilemma-question. If the prophetic and apostolic claims about Christ's crucifixion are but *tašbīh*, an appearance with no basis in reality, who then is the author of this *tašbīh*, God or Satan? For Timothy, it is obvious that the author of this *tašbīh* cannot be God: "it is entirely unfitting for God that He deceitfully show one thing in the place of another."<sup>(213)</sup> Other apologists made the same point equally forcefully. In the context of a discussion of the Qur'ān's *šubbiha lahum*, Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī argued that to make God the subject of the verb *šabbaha* is to make Him the source of error (*ḍalālah*), to which the only fitting response is *ḥāšā -llāhi!* ("God forbid!") or *ma'āḍa -llāhi min ḥāḍa l-qawl!* ("God preserve us from such a statement!").<sup>(214)</sup> Passing from a Nestorian and a Melkite to a Jacobite, we find the monk Eustathius making exactly the same points:<sup>(215)</sup>

معاذ الله أن يقال <sup>(1)</sup> «شَبَّ شَيْئاً» <sup>(2)</sup> بشيء! وإنّا، متى قلنا هذا، فقد وصفنا الله بتضليل <sup>(3)</sup> عباده، وأنّه يُرِيهم خيالاً لا على حقيقة، ثمّ يعاقبهم على ذلك من بعده!

بتضلیه MS (3). شی MS (2). یقول MS (1).

210. For this section, see MINGANA, "Apology" (1928) 114/2/16–115/2/1 [ET 41–42]; PUTMAN/SAMIR, *Église* (1975), 37\*–38\* (#199–202); CASPAR, "Versions" (1977), 142 (#32).

211. חַסְדָּא וְחַסְדָּא [read חַסְדָּא , חַסְדָּא , MINGANA, "Apology" (1928), 114/2/17.

212. See above, p. 233, note 103. Comparison of the two texts allows the suggestion that what al-Mahdi actually said was شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ هَكَذَا. The longer Arabic recension of the text mistranslates when it makes the *prophets* the (plural) subject of the verb: إِنَّ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ تَشْبِيهُهُ شَبَّهُوا الْمَسِيحَ هَكَذَا (PUTMAN/SAMIR, *Église* (1975), 37\* (#199)).

213. سوالیہ: ملا علی لا فال لا کہو ; وہجہ: وسہا کہو  
 مینگنا، "Apology" (1928), 114/2/20-115/1/1.

214. MARCUZZO, *Dialogue* (1986), 390-93 (#279-84).

215. Mingana chr. ar. 52, f. 155<sup>v</sup>/2-5.

## TRANSLATION:

God forbid that it be said, "He made something the likeness of something else." For if we say this we have described God as leading his servants into error (*tadlīl*), and that He shows them an illusion (*ḥayāl*) with no basis in reality, and then punishes them for that afterwards!

Eustathius goes on to assert that it is the *demons* who make unreal likenesses and illusions (*yatašabbihūna wa-yataḥāyilūna*).<sup>(216)</sup>

Therefore the *tašbīh* may not be ascribed to God. But now, returning to the other horn of Timothy's dilemma, may it be ascribed to Satan? Timothy thinks not; one would then have to be prepared to admit that Satan not only played a role in the divine economy, but was also able to deceive the *ḥawāriyyūn* ("disciples," in the Qur'ān's vocabulary) -- who, according to the New Testament, had the power to *cast out* demons!<sup>(217)</sup>

## 2. "The Refutation of the One Who Denies the Crucifixion"

The text *al-Radd 'alā man ḡahada l-ṣalḥ* ("The Refutation of the One Who Denies the Crucifixion") displays continuity with, but also a good deal of development over, the simple dilemma-question posed by Timothy. In *al-Radd* the claim of *tašbīh* to which the text responds is clearly that of the Muslim commentators: something or someone resembling Jesus was crucified in his place. Timothy's (two-fold) dilemma is developed into a *four-fold* inclusive disjunction: those who claim *tašbīh* must admit that its author be either God, or Christ, or Satan, or the Jewish leaders.<sup>(218)</sup> Each possibility is dealt with in turn.

(a) *God* cannot be the author of the *tašbīh* "because He does not induce error by means of an illusion."<sup>(219)</sup> The author supports his claim that *tašbīh* is not to be ascribed to God with a story known from the Old Testament *and* the Qur'ān, that of God's sending Aaron to be a spokesman for Moses.<sup>(220)</sup> When God sent Moses to Egypt, He did *not* loosen his tongue, despite his need to speak, but rather sent him help in the person of his brother, "in order to refute [any charge against Him of] *tašbīh*."<sup>(221)</sup> The point appears to be that just as God did not deliver Moses from difficulty by investing him with an eloquence not his by nature, neither did He deliver Jesus from crucifixion by investing someone (or something) else with an

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216. Ibid., lines 5–7.

217. MINGANA, "Apology" (1928), 115/1/6–10.

218. The Arabic text of *al-Radd* is edited as Appendix II to the dissertation. For the present point, see below, p. 302 (#8).

219. Ibid. (#9).

220. Exodus 4:10–16; *Ṭā Hā* (20):25–32; *al-Šu'arā'* (26):12–13; *al-Qaṣaṣ* (28):34–35.

221. See below, pp. 302–3 (#10).

appearance not his by nature.

(b) But neither can *Christ* be the author of the *tašbīh*, for this would make nonsense of his career and of the mission of his apostles as understood by the Qur'ān itself:<sup>(222)</sup>

He who by the witness of the Qur'ān is blessed the day he was born,  
and the day he dies,  
and the day he is raised up alive [*Maryam* (19):31, 33] —  
how could he become in his death a maker of illusions (*muḥayyil*),  
and in his rising a leader into error (*muḍallil*),  
and through *tašbīh* a seducer into deviation (*muḡawwī*)?

He who was sent in the footsteps of the prophets  
as admonition and guidance [*al-Mā'idah* (5):46] —  
how could he become the cause of straying from the truth (*ḍalāl*)?

He who is a sign unto men and a mercy [*Maryam* (19):21] —  
how could he be made similar to an illusion (*taḥyīl*)?

(c) As for *Satan*, not only did he have no cause to put forth a person<sup>(223)</sup> to be crucified in Christ's place, but also his success in this deception would have required Christ's active co-operation, since he would have had to disappear at precisely the right moment and say nothing about the deception to his disciples! But in biblical fact Christ foretold his crucifixion, and after his resurrection displayed his wounds to Thomas and to all the disciples.<sup>(224)</sup>

(d) Finally, not only would *the leaders of the Jews* have had no reason to work such a deception (since the common people would have flocked to the living Jesus after having seen him -- apparently -- crucified and dead), neither would they have had the means, for how were they to find someone indistinguishable from Jesus to be crucified in his place? In fact, perfect doubles are not to be found in this world.<sup>(225)</sup>

### 3. A concluding comment

There is nearly always a certain artificiality about the use of the dialectic device of disjunction, and that is surely the case here. No Muslim ever actually suggested that the active subject of the *tašbīh* of *al-Nisā'* (4):157 was Satan, or Christ himself, or the leaders of the Jews. The commentators cited by al-Ṭabarī all assumed as a matter of course that *God* was the active subject. Timothy or the anonymous Nestorian author of *al-Radd* may have impressed wavering Christians with their

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222. See below, pp. 303–4 (#12).

223. Here, for the first time in the text, the word *šaḥṣ*, "person" is used as that which is crucified in Jesus' place.

224. See below, pp. 304–5 (#13–14).

225. See below, p. 305 (#15).

suggested that the active subject of the *tašbīh* of *al-Nisā'* (4):157 was Satan, or Christ himself, or the leaders of the Jews. The commentators cited by al-Ṭabarī all assumed as a matter of course that *God* was the active subject. Timothy or the anonymous Nestorian author of *al-Radd* may have impressed wavering Christians with their dialectical skills, and this was without doubt a good part of their purpose in writing. It is doubtful, however, that they would have made much impression on a Muslim *mutakallim*. Both Timothy and the anonymous Nestorian fail to address the question: *Why* is it unthinkable that God should be the author of a deception in order to deliver His apostle? Why should human beings *not* exult in the devices of Him who is "the best of devisers"?<sup>(226)</sup> The reader here senses the presence of a *Grunddifferenz* between Christianity and Islam that the apologetic arguments thus far have failed to reach.

#### D. Final Questions about *al-Nisā'* (4):157

##### 1. Timothy's debate, IV: completed argument, unanswered questions

Having dealt with the caliph's suggestion that the Old Testament evidence for Christ's crucifixion could be dismissed with the Qur'ānic *šubbiha lahum*, Timothy believed that he had successfully demonstrated that crucifixion could be added at the head of his list of Qur'ānically-established events in the career of Jesus, yielding the sequence: crucifixion, death, resurrection, ascension. He wound up his argument as follows:<sup>(227)</sup>

Now if the crucifixion was a false likeness (*dūmyā kadābā*),<sup>(228)</sup> and from the crucifixion came death, then the death was also a false likeness. However, we say that from the death came the resurrection to life; therefore the resurrection and the life were a false likeness. From the resurrection came the ascension into heaven; [if the crucifixion was a false likeness,] all these things are spurious and unreal.

But if the ascension into heaven was a reality (*bašrārā*) and not a likeness (*bdūmyā*), and the resurrection preceded the ascension into heaven, then the resurrection was also a reality and not a likeness. [And since the death preceded the resurrection, then the death was also a reality and not a likeness.] Now if the death was a reality and not a likeness, and the crucifixion preceded the death, then the crucifixion is therefore also a reality, and not a likeness or an illusion (*hagāgā*).<sup>(229)</sup>

Timothy's argument has come full circle – and a neatly constructed circle it is, even if we have found weak points in its circumference. There are issues, however, which the circle simply does not enclose. Most notably, Timothy avoids passing any

226. خير الماكرين; *Āl 'Imrān* (3):54, *al-Anfāl* (8):30.

227. MINGANA, "Apology" (1928), 115/1/10–2/1. Phrases in square brackets are added to make Timothy's train of thought as clear as possible.

228. Equivalent to تشبيه كاذب.

229. Equivalent to خيال.

direct judgement on *al-Nisā'* (4):157. Perhaps he did this out of his famous tact,<sup>(230)</sup> not wishing to cause offense by calling the Qur'ānic verse false,<sup>(231)</sup> or perhaps he simply had no opportunity to present a Christian reading of the verse. In the following paragraphs, we shall take note of some writers who grappled more directly with *al-Nisā'* (4):157 than did Timothy.

## 2. Contradicting *al-Nisā'* (4):157

The outright rejection of the reliability of the Qur'ānic text is one possibility for dealing with *al-Nisā'* (4):157, although, of course, a dangerous one for a Christian apologist, who would have to take refuge in anonymity (e.g. "al-Kindī," who, however, did not react specifically to *al-Nisā'* (4):157)<sup>(232)</sup> or in insinuation (e.g. 'Ammār al-Baṣrī in a passage to be studied later).<sup>(233)</sup> There were, however, a few well known members of the *Islamic* community who explicitly called into question the reliability of the Qur'ānic text, citing *al-Nisā'* (4):157 in support of their positions. For example, Abū l-Ḥusayn Aḥmad b. Yaḥya b. Ishāq, known as Ibn al-Rāwandī (d. mid-9th c.),<sup>(234)</sup> wrote the *Kitāb al-zumurrud*,<sup>(235)</sup> a critique of the idea of prophecy in general, and of prophecy in Islam in particular. Among his arguments is that the Qur'ān is wrong in denying the crucifixion of Christ in the face of the overwhelming consensus of (mutually hostile!) Jews and Christians with respect to its historicity.<sup>(236)</sup> Some years later, the celebrated physician, alchemist and philosopher Abū Bakr Muḥammad b.

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230. The best example of Timothy's tact is his response to the caliph's question, "What do you say about Muḥammad?" His "Muḥammad walked in the path of the prophets" (with precise specification of the sense in which he did so) is a splendid bit of inter-religious diplomacy, simultaneously evasive and satisfying. See MINGANA, "Apology" (1928), 133/1/16–134/2/17 [ET 61–62]; PUTMAN/SAMIR, *Église* (1975), 31\*–33\* (#158–68); CASPAR, "Versions" (1977), 150–52 (#46–50), with comment at pp. 123–24.

231. We might notice that like Timothy, Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī never explicitly comes to grips with the Qur'ānic "they did not slay him, neither crucified him," although, as we saw above (p. 130), he does offer a Christian interpretation of the *ṣubbiha lahum*; see MARCUZZO, *Dialogue* (1986), 390–95 (#276–88).

232. For al-Kindī's critique of the Qur'ān see TARTAR, "Dialogue" (1977), 101–132 [FT idem, *Dialogue* (1985), 175–206].

233. See below, pp. 283–86.

234. On him, see KRAUS, "Ibn al-Rāwandī" (1938), and VAJDA, "Ibn al-Rāwandī" (1971). The date of Ibn al-Rāwandī's death is variously given as in the mid- or late-ninth century, but the most reliable report appears to be that of al-Mas'ūdī, who states that he died at mid-century aged 36 or 40; MAS'ŪDĪ, *Murūğ* (1861–76), VII, 237. Vajda points out that he is already cited in a work of al-Muqammi (floruit last third of the ninth century).

235. GAL S.I, 340–41; GAS I, 620–21. The text is preserved only through citations in the *Mağālīs* of the Ismā'īlī al-Mu'ayyad Širāzī (d. 1077), ed. KRAUS, "Ketzergeschichte" (1933).

236. Ibid., 104.

Zakarīyā' al-Rāzī (d. 925)<sup>(237)</sup> made the same argument in his *Kitāb maḥārīq al-anbiyā'*,<sup>(238)</sup> one of two books in which he argued that religion and philosophy were irreconcilable.

### 3. Reinterpreting *al-Nisā'* (4):157

The usual Christian apologetic procedure with respect to *al-Nisā'* (4):157 was to propose a Christian reading of the Qur'ānic text. Two such readings were especially common, received an early hearing in certain Islamic circles, and are periodically "discovered" anew. Both are found in *al-Radd 'alā man ḡaḥada l-ṣalb*, to which we now turn.

#### (a) *The humanity, not the divinity was killed*

The most obvious Christian reading of *al-Nisā'* (4):157 exploits the humanity/divinity distinction in the one Christ.<sup>(239)</sup> In the Syriac text of Timothy's discussion of the crucifixion, it is stated that Christ was killed *babsar* ("in the flesh"),<sup>(240)</sup> while a corresponding passage from the *beta* recension of the dialogue of Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī reads "the Jews only crucified him *according to his humanity*."<sup>(241)</sup> "The Apocalypse/Legend of Baḥīrā" explicitly applies the humanity/divinity distinction to the interpretation of *al-Nisā'* (4):157:<sup>(242)</sup>

237. On this great scholar (known in the West as Rhazes), see KRAUS/PINES, "al-Rāzī" (1936).

238. GAL S.I, 417–18. The work is partially preserved in the response of the Ismā'īlī Abū Ḥatīm al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-lām al-nubuwwah* (see GAS I, 573), composed in ca. 934. An edition of these fragments is KRAUS, "Raziana II" (1936); the passage concerning *al-Nisā'* (4):157 is found at p. 366. I have not been able to consult the complete edition of the *Kitāb al-lām al-nubuwwah* by S. al-SAWY and Gh. R. AAVANI, Teheran: 1977.

239. For an extensive discussion of the apologetic use of this distinction, see below, pp. 246–53.

240. MINGANA, "Apology" (1928), 115/2/11–12.

241. فقد صلبوه اليهود بناسوته; Vatican syr. 608, f. 82<sup>v</sup>. The reading *binasūtihi* (the preposition is absent from Paris ar. 215, f. 61<sup>v</sup>, while the text of Vatican ar. 136, f. 108<sup>v</sup>, is here deficient) is supported by Vollers's GT of his tenth-century manuscript: "so haben die Juden ihn nach seiner menschlichen Natur gekreuzigt"; VOLLERS, "Religionsgespräch" (1908), 58.

242. Paris ar. 215, f. 161<sup>r</sup>/15–161<sup>v</sup>/2, reproduced (inaccurately) in GOTTHEIL, "Legend" (1900–1), 60–61 [ET (1903), 138].

We recall that "The Apocalypse/Legend of Baḥīrā" claims that a *Christian* was responsible for much of the Qur'ān and many Islamic practices, which originally had the aim of instilling Christian beliefs, including belief in the crucifixion of Christ. In addition to Baḥīrā's explanation of *al-Nisā'* (4):157, note his explanation of *al-Mā'idah* (5):64, "The Jews have said, 'God's hand is fettered': these are the Jews who mocked Christ while he was on the cross, demanding that he come down and save himself (ibid., (1900–1), 62–63 [ET (1903), 140]). As for the Friday midday congregational prayers, according to Baḥīrā they observe the time of Adam's creation and of humanity's salvation in the crucifixion of Christ (ibid. (1900–1), 75 [ET (1903), 148]). See also

وكتبْتُ له أيضاً: «وما قتلوه وما<sup>(1)</sup> صلبوه ولكن شُبِّهَ لهم». أعني بذلك أَنَّ المسيح لم يموت<sup>(2)</sup> بجوهر اللاهوت، بل إِنَّمَا مات بجوهر ناسوته. لَمَّا أَرَادُوا [أَنْ]<sup>(3)</sup> يكسروا ساقِيه على الصليب مثل [f. 161<sup>v</sup>] اللصين، «شُبِّهَ لهم» أَنَّهُ مَيِّت، لئلا يكسروا له عظم، ليتَمَّ الكتاب إذ يقول، «وعظم لا يُكسر له».

(1) MS لا. (2) MS يموت. (3) MS omit.

#### TRANSLATION:

And I [Baḥīrā] also wrote for him [Muḥammad]: "They did not slay him, neither crucified him, but *šubbiha lahum*." I mean by that that Christ did not die in the nature of the divinity, but only died in the nature of his humanity. When they wanted to break his legs [while he was] upon the cross as [they had done with] the two thieves, it appeared to them (*šubbiha lahum*) that he was dead, so that they did not break a bone of his. [This happened] in order to fulfill the scripture that says: "Not a bone of his shall be broken" [Psalm 34:20; John 19:36].

In *al-Radd 'alā man ḡaḥad al-ṣalb* we read:<sup>(243)</sup>

The meaning of "Christ" among Christians comprises the nature (*ḡawhar*) of God and the nature of man, meaning that he is Anointer and Anointed, divinity and humanity, according to the the union which they affirm and believe. Thus he was killed in his humanity, but not killed nor crucified in his divinity, although "it appeared to them" (*šubbiha lahum*) that his affair had come to nought, and his precepts (*sunan*) to dissolution.

The use of the humanity/divinity distinction to explain *al-Nisā'* (4):157 became traditional within the Arabic-speaking church.<sup>(244)</sup> Furthermore, as we noted when discussing Massignon's thesis,<sup>(245)</sup> this sort of discourse made sense to those Muslims (Ismā'īlīs, Ṣūfīs, philosophers) who operated with a body/(immortal or immortalized) soul distinction. From the tenth century, for example, we have the account of Christ's death from Letter 44 of the *Risā'il al-Iḥwān al-Ṣafā'* ("Letters of the 'Brethren of Purity'"), which straightforwardly states that Christ's humanity (*nāsūt*) was crucified and buried, though he in his personal self ascended to the throne of the Father, thence always and everywhere to be with the disciples.<sup>(246)</sup>

pp. 116 and 118 (note 118) above.

243. For the Arabic text, see below, pp. 299–300 (#3).

244. For example, Paul of Antioch (late 12th century) uses it in his popular apology addressed to Muslims: P. KHOURY, *Paul* (1964), 73\* (#38).

245. See pp. 108–9 above.

246. See CHARFI, *Radd* (1986), 382 [Arabic text and comment]; MARQUET, "Iḥwān" (1982), 144–46 [FT and comment]; ROBINSON, *Christ* (1991), 55–57 [ET and comment].

(b) *Intentions and actual results; Āl 'Imrān (3):169*

The text of *al-Radd* goes on to give a second possible explanation of "they did not slay him, neither crucified him." The *intention* of the Jews in putting Jesus to death had been to deter people from following him and to put an end to his ways and precepts. But the actual *result* of their action, after Jesus' resurrection and glorification was the precise opposite of their intention!<sup>(247)</sup>

[T]heir action became a cause of the spread of his affair in all the earth, and of the loftiness of his prestige in the world. Thus it is as if they killed him and "did not kill him," crucified him and "did not crucify him." But "it appeared to them" (*šubbiha lahum*) that through their action his way (*šarī'ah*) had come to nought, and his precepts (*sunan*) to dissolution.

*al-Radd* goes on to cite Āl 'Imrān (3):169 – لا تحسبن الذين قُتلوا في سبيل الله – أَمْواتاً بل أحياء عند ربهم يرزقون – in support of this interpretation:<sup>(248)</sup>

This discourse agrees with the statement of the Qur'ān, "Count not those who were killed in God's way as dead, but rather living with their Lord, by Him provided." It testified that they were killed, and yet are not dead but rather alive, because they "were killed in God's way." Likewise *Christ* was not killed because he was killed "in God's way," and was not crucified because he was crucified "in God's way."

This line of argument, interestingly enough, is echoed in *Ismā'īlī* defences of the Qur'ānic revelation against the attacks of Ibn al-Rawandī and Rhazes that we met with earlier.<sup>(249)</sup> In his *Kitāb a'lām al-nubuwwah*, Abū Ḥātim Aḥmad b. Ḥamdān b. Aḥmad al-Warsānī al-Layṭī al-Rāzī (d. 933) responded to Rhazes, on the authority of one of his teachers, that *al-Nisā'* (4):157 does *not* deny the crucifixion; since Jesus died a martyr, his death must be interpreted in terms of Āl 'Imrān (3):169.<sup>(250)</sup> Precisely the same response is given to Ibn al-Rāwandī in the 520th *maḡlis* of al-Mu'ayyad Širāzī (d. 1077).<sup>(251)</sup>

247. For the Arabic text, see below, pp. 300–301 (#5–6).

248. For the Arabic text see below, p. 301 (#7).

249. Above, pp. 141–42. On the *Ismā'īlīs*, see IVANOW, "*Ismā'īliya*" (1938), who considers the two writers about to be mentioned among "the leading *Ismā'īlī* philosophers, the real founders of their doctrine" (p. 99).

250. KRAUS, "*Raziana II*" (1936), 366 only reproduces the objection of Rhazes. The response of Abū Ḥātim is summarized in MASSIGNON, "*Christ*" (1932), 534.

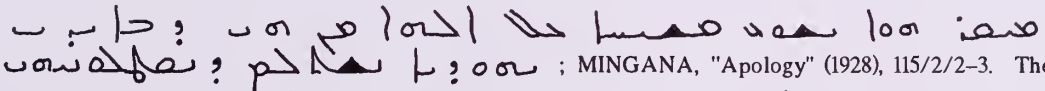


251. KRAUS, "*Ketzergeschichte*" (1933), 104–5.

#### 4. A concluding comment

We have now seen that the whole of *al-Nisā'* (4):157 was judged by Christian apologists to be susceptible of Christian interpretation. "They did not slay him, neither crucified him" could be interpreted either in terms of the divinity/humanity distinction in the one Christ, or in terms of *Āl 'Imrān* (3):169. As for *šubbiha lahum*, it could mean that the crucifixion "was problematic for" Christ's crucifiers, or that "it appeared to them" that Christ had been effectively done away with. Thus it was that Christian apologists attempted to take words that the generality of Muslims had always understood as a denial of Christ's crucifixion, and absorb them into the Christian understanding of God's dealings with humankind. If these few words could so be absorbed, however, the Qur'ānic understanding of salvation history which lay behind them could not be. The next section will help us to see this more clearly.

### III. Christ Was Too Honored before God to Undergo Crucifixion!

The immediate response of the caliph al-Mahdī to Timothy's argument for the historicity of the crucifixion was: "Christ was too honored before God for him to be delivered into the hands of the Jews, that they might crucify him!".<sup>(252)</sup> The text of the Timothy-al-Mahdī debate does not, unfortunately, present the reasoning behind the caliph's objection. One bit of explanation comes from the objection in the form in which it came into the *beta*-recension of the dialogue of Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī: to confess the crucifixion is to make Christ *marḍūl*, "something despicable":<sup>(253)</sup>

252. ; MINGANA, "Apology" (1928), 115/2/2–3. The Syriac  surely represents the Arabic *أكرم من أن*, which is what we find (a) in the shorter Arabic recension of the dialogue (CASPAR, "Versions" (1977), 142 (#33)): *إن المسيح كان أكرم على الله من أن يدع اليهود يصلبونه ويقتلونه* ("Christ was too honored before God for Him to let the Jews crucify and kill him"); (b) and in the Timothy-derived material in the *beta* recension of the dialogue of Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī; see below. The form of the objection found in the longer Arabic recension (PUTMAN/SAMIR, *Église* (1975), 38\* (#203)), *إن عيسى المسيح كان مكرماً لدى الله، فلم يكن يسلمه بيد اليهود ليقتلوه* ("Jesus Christ was honored before God, thus He would not deliver him into the hands of the Jews so that they kill him"), mechanically but incorrectly translates the Syriac participle  with the Arabic participle *مكرم*.
253. Edited from Vatican ar. 136, f. 108<sup>v</sup> [V], Vatican syr. 608, f. 82<sup>f</sup> [S], and Paris ar. 215, f. 61<sup>v</sup> [P]; cf. VOLLERS, "Religionsgespräch" (1908), 58.

كان المسيح أكرم على الله من<sup>(1)</sup> أن يدفعه إلى<sup>(2)</sup> أيدي اليهود<sup>(3)</sup> الكفرة ليصلبوه.<sup>(4)</sup> فلا<sup>(5)</sup> تجعل<sup>(6)</sup> المسيح مرذولاً!

(1) S omit. (2) V يدفعه في. P يوقعه. (3) V +و. (4) S ليصلبونه. P ليقتلوه. (5) P ولا. (6) P يجعل.

#### TRANSLATION:

Christ was too honored before God for Him to hand him over into the hands of the unbelieving Jews, that they might crucify him. So do not make Christ something despicable!

And in his *Kitāb al-burhān*, ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī asks:<sup>(254)</sup>

وكيف يتهمون، والمسيح عندهم نبي، أنا قصّرنا به في ذكرنا أنه  
صلب، يقولون إنه أكرم على الله من أن يدعه يُصلب!

#### TRANSLATION:

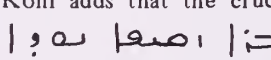
How, when Christ is [only] a prophet for them, do they accuse us of having disparaged him by mentioning that he was crucified, saying, "He was too honored before God for Him to let him be crucified!"

To confess the crucifixion is therefore to deny the honor in which God holds Christ, to disparage him, to make him something despicable.<sup>(255)</sup>

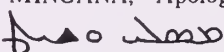
The Nestorian texts in which this accusation is recorded are united in presenting a Christian response which draws upon the Qur’ān’s own testimony: many prophets before Jesus had been killed!<sup>(256)</sup> So Timothy: "The prophets have generally been killed by the Jews, therefore it is not the case that everyone who is killed by the Jews is despicable (*maslay*) and contemptible (*ṣiṭ*)."<sup>(257)</sup>

Detailed stories of the deaths of the prophets are not related in the Qur’ān, but some had long been familiar to Jews and Christians<sup>(258)</sup> and came to be told in Islamic

254. Chapter 8; HAYEK, *Apologie* (1977), 80\*/1-2.

255. The "student" who represents an Islamic viewpoint in Question 10 of the *Scholion* of Theodore bar Kōnī adds that the crucifixion would be shame (ردن) for Christ and for the Christians:  ("it is not fitting that we confess a crucified man"); SCHER, *Bar Kōnī* (1912), 271/15-18.

256. *al-Baqarah* (2):61, 91; *Āl ‘Imrān* (3):21, 112, 181; *al-Nisā’* (4):155. Note that the assertion in *al-Nisā’* (4):155 comes in the very thought unit, verses 155-61, which includes the denial of Christ’s crucifixion (v. 157).

257. MINGANA, "Apology" (1928), 115/2/8-10. The longer Arabic recension of the debate renders  with PUTMAN/SAMIR, *Église* (1975), 38\* (#203).

258. See SCHERMANN, *Legenden* (1907).

circles as well. In his *Kitāb al-masā'il wa-l-ağwibah* 'Ammār al-Baṣrī relates, in a fashion suggesting that the stories should have come as no surprise to his Muslim reader, how Isaiah was sawn in two, Jeremiah stoned to death, and Zechariah<sup>(259)</sup> killed "as a sacrifice between the altar and the sanctuary."<sup>(260)</sup> In his response to the Muslim accusation that Christians disparage Jesus, however, 'Ammār does not mention these Old Testament figures. He gives just one example, that of John the Baptist, Yaḥyā b. Zakariyyā:<sup>(261)</sup>

فليت شعري، ما يقولون في يحيى بن زكريا، وهم مقرّون أنّه ضُرب عنقه  
وؤُهب رأسه لجارية رقاصة سألت أن يُؤهب لها؟ ألّهوانه على الله تركه حتّى  
فُعل له ذلك؟ بل يعترفون بكرامته على الله!

#### TRANSLATION:

What on earth do they say about Yaḥyā b. Zakariyyā, since they acknowledge that he was beheaded, and his head given to a dancing girl who asked that it be given her?<sup>(262)</sup> Is it because of his contemptible estate (*hawānihi*) before God that He abandoned him so that these things happened to him? Nay, they confess his honored estate (*karāmatihī*) before God.

'Ammār's choice of the example of John the Baptist is rather clever. In the Qur'ān, the benediction pronounced upon John -- يوم يموت . . . وسلام عليه ("Peace be upon him . . . the day he dies")<sup>(263)</sup> -- is paralleled by that pronounced by Jesus upon himself: والسّلام عليّ . . . يوم أموت ("Peace be upon me . . . the day I die").<sup>(264)</sup> If Muslims acknowledge that John, despite the benediction pronounced upon him the day of his death, was executed, why should they not acknowledge the Christian claim that Christ was similarly executed?

As convincing as this argument might seem to Christian apologists, it misses the Qur'ānic point of the objection.<sup>(265)</sup> In the Qur'ān, Christ is not simply another of

259. Not the writing prophet but the son of Jehoiada mentioned in 2 Chronicles 24:20–22 and Matthew 23:35.

260. HAYEK, *Apologie* (1977), 247\*/11–15. The martyrdom of Isaiah is recorded in the Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 10), and all three martyrdoms were well known in the patristic period among Christians; see SCHERMANN, *Legenden* (1907), especially pp. 74–89, 105–8. The story of the martyrdom of Isaiah, at least, was well known among Muslims, having been related by Wahb and Ibn Ishāq. See ṬABARĪ, *Tārīḥ* (1960–69), I, 536–37 [ET of Ibn Ishāq's report: NEWBY, *Prophet* (1989), 180].

261. HAYEK, *Apologie* (1977), 80\*/2–5.

262. The story of the death of John the Baptist is not related in the Qur'ān, but was widely known among Muslims. For Ibn Ishāq's version of the story, see NEWBY, *Prophet* (1989), 202.

263. *Maryam* (19):15.

264. *Maryam* (19):33.

265. For what follows, see BIJLEFELD, "Prophet" (1969), esp. 16–23.

the prophets (*anbiyā'*), many of whom, including John, were indeed killed. Rather, he is one of God's *apostles* (*rusul*). The appropriate context for the interpretation of the story of 'Īsā b. Maryam is therefore the Qur'ānic witness to the mission of the *apostles*, including Noah, Lot, Abraham,<sup>(266)</sup> Ishmael, Moses (and Aaron), Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, Šu'ayb, and, last and by no means least, Muḥammad.

The typical literary form by which the Qur'ān tells of the mission of the apostles is the *punishment story*,<sup>(267)</sup> in which "a messenger [*rasūl*] is sent to his people; he delivers his message, but is disbelieved and the message rejected; the punishment of God then falls upon the people for their unbelief."<sup>(268)</sup> To this description of the *genre* we must add: and God saves his *rasūl*, both from the murderous intentions of those who disbelieve his message and from the punishment which falls upon them.<sup>(269)</sup> Thus Noah is saved from those who would stone him, and from the universal flood.<sup>(270)</sup> Abraham is kept safe, though cast into the fire.<sup>(271)</sup> Lot is delivered from the destruction of his city.<sup>(272)</sup> Moses and those he leads are delivered from Pharaoh's host at the sea.<sup>(273)</sup> Ṣāliḥ is saved from those who plot to kill him.<sup>(274)</sup> Throughout the punishment stories, the second and fourth forms of the verb *nġy*, "to deliver," ring out with regularity:<sup>(275)</sup> in every case, God delivered His apostle, and those who obeyed him. And thus Muḥammad, the apostle to whom these stories were revealed, is to take heart from them.<sup>(276)</sup>

That the story of 'Īsā b. Maryam is to be ranged among those just mentioned, including the story of Muḥammad, is clear from the striking verse *Āl 'Imrān* (3):54: *وَمَكْرُوا مَكْرَ اللَّهِ، وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الْمَاكِرِينَ* ("And they devised, and God devised, and God is the best of devisers"), which immediately precedes verse 55 concerning 'Īsā's

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266. Abraham is not directly termed an apostle in the Qur'ān, but a comparison of his story to that of the other apostles makes clear that he belongs in the list. See *al-'Ankabūt* (29):18 and *al-Tawbah* (9):70.

267. See WATT, *Introduction* (1970), 127–35. The most important Qur'ānic compilations of punishment stories are: *al-A'rāf* (7):59–102; *Hūd* (11):25–95; *al-Mu'minūn* (23):23–49; *al-Šu'arā'* (26):10–190; *al-Naml* (27):7–58; *al-'Ankabūt* (29):14–40; and *al-Šāffāt* (37):75–148.

268. WATT, *Introduction* (1970), 135.

269. There is one Qur'ānic text that speaks clearly of the killing of apostles, *Āl 'Imrān* (3):183, but it would seem to be the exception that proves the rule. As for *al-Baqarah* (2):87 and *al-Mā'idah* (5):70, *يَقْتُلُونَ* may best be translated "they wish to kill." See BIJLEFELD, "Prophet" (1969), 22–23 (note 97).

270. E.g., *al-Šu'arā'* (26):116–20.

271. E.g., *al-Anbiyā'* (21):68–70. For Ibn Ishāq's expansion of the story, see NEWBY, *Prophet* (1989), 70–71.

272. E.g., *al-Šu'arā'* (26):169–73.

273. E.g., *al-Šu'arā'* (26):52–66.

274. E.g., *al-Naml* (27):48–50.

275. *al-A'rāf* (7):72, 83; *Hūd* (11):58, 66, 94; *al-Mu'minūn* (23):28; *al-Šu'arā'* (26):65, 119, 170; *al-Naml* (27):57; *al-'Ankabūt* (29):15, 24, 32; *al-Šāffāt* (37):76, 134; and *al-Qamar* (54):34.

276. *Hūd* (11):120.

*wafāh* and *raf'*, the object of much discussion earlier. Close parallels to this verse include:

(a) *al-Anfāl* (8):30, وَإِذْ يَمْكُرُ بِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِيُثْبِتُوكَ أَوْ يَقْتُلُوكَ أَوْ يُخْرِجُوكَ، وَاللَّهُ خَيْرَ الْمَاكِرِينَ ("And when the unbelievers were devising against thee, to confine thee, or slay thee, or to expel thee, and were devising, and God was devising; and God is the best of devisers"), concerning God's protection of Muḥammad.

(b) *al-Naml* (27):50: وَمَكُرُوا مَكْرًا وَمَكْرَنَا مَكْرًا، وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ("And they devised a device, and We likewise devised a device, while they were not aware"), speaking of God's delivery of Ṣāliḥ from those who were plotting to kill him.

(c) *al-Tāriq* (86):15-16: إِنَّهُمْ يَكِيدُونَ كَيْدًا وَأَكِيدُ كَيْدًا ("They are devising guile, and I am devising guile"), again concerning God's protection of Muḥammad from the unbelievers. The use of the word *kayd* ("guile, deception") in this verse leads me to add

(d) *al-Anbiyā'* (21):70 (or *al-Ṣāffāt* (37):98): فَأَرَادُوا بِهِ كَيْدًا، فَجَعَلْنَاهُمُ الْأَخْسَرِينَ (الْأَسْفَلِينَ) ("They desired to outwit him; so We made them the worse losers (lower ones)"), referring to those who attempted to burn Abraham.

As was the case with Abraham, with Ṣāliḥ, and with Muḥammad, so also was the case with 'Īsā b. Maryam: whatever the plots devised by the unbelievers to do away with God's apostle, God thwarts them and rescues His apostle in His own cunning and surprising way, for *He* is "the best of devisers."

Perhaps this discussion of the background for the assertion that Jesus was "too honored before God" to undergo crucifixion can be taken one step further by asking: What is it about the specifically *apostolic* vocation, as opposed to the more general *prophetic* vocation, that must needs involve the inviolability of the apostle? Bijlefeld has pointed to the answer:<sup>(277)</sup>

The *rasūl* is a witness and warner to his own people, who therefore will have no excuse on judgment day . . . . [H]e is God's 'representative' to his people, and as such he has a great responsibility as well as a tremendous authority . . . . Noteworthy . . . is the clear assurance that God will protect and rescue His *rasūl* . . . , because the defeat of His representative would be a victory over Him -- and that is evidently impossible. No matter how strong the resistance is, the ultimate victory is not with men but with God . . . . Prophets have been killed, but the Apostle must triumph in order to manifest on earth the triumph of God.

Earlier in this chapter we spoke of the intra-systemic consistency of the Christian biblical/dogmatic understanding of salvation history, with the cross of Christ at the center. We see now that at precisely that central point, the Christian understanding of salvation history is at odds with a *Qur'ānic* understanding of the ways of God with humankind which has its own integrity, depth, and density. In a Christian construal of the biblical materials, Jesus of Nazareth is the limit and goal of

277. BIJLEFELD, "Prophet" (1969), 19–20.

a sequence of prophets in which there is an ever greater identification of the prophet with the message he bears, an identification he can only *suffer*. The sequence that leads from the earliest biblical prophets to Isaiah, Hosea, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the mysterious Servant of Yahweh reaches its culmination in the crucified Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>(278)</sup> For this Christian understanding of the history of prophecy, a Jesus who escaped death would be incomprehensible, a great rend in the fabric of biblical/dogmatic reality. In the Qur'ān's presentation of God's dealings with humankind, by contrast, 'Īsā b. Maryam takes his place in a sequence of apostles who, being cunningly *delivered* by God from the plots of their enemies, are themselves signs of God's victory, and heartening examples for the one in whom God's victory will be made especially manifest, Muḥammad, and for the community that hearkens to him. For this understanding of prophetic/apostolic history, a crucified 'Īsā could only be a shadow cast on the victory of God.

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278. A classic description of this "trend" in the biblical understanding of prophecy is VON RAD, *Theology* (1965), II.

## Chapter Four

### THE CRUCIFIXION OF THE REDEEMER

#### Introduction

In the previous chapter we examined the disagreement between Christians and Muslims with respect to the *facticity* of Christ's crucifixion, a disagreement that we have come to see as nearly inevitable given the very different tendencies of the biblical and Qur'ānic stories of God's dealings with humankind through prophets and apostles. The apologist, however, cannot accept disagreement and incomprehension as finally inevitable; instead, disagreement acts as a spur to the search for common ground. For the arabophone Christian apologists, the disagreement between Christians and Muslims about the work and person of Jesus Christ presented a clear challenge: to attempt to construct from the biblical materials – and, to whatever extent possible, Qur'ānic materials as well – a narrative of God's dealings with humankind that would at once be Christian and that would – somehow – *commend itself to Muslims*. With respect to the crucifixion of Christ, such narrative-construction would leave to one side the (rather futile) dispute about its sheer facticity, and concentrate instead on attempting to explain its salvation-historical necessity.

I have spoken here of *a* narrative of God's dealings with humankind because, of course, there are a multitude of ways in which the diverse biblical materials, seen through the lenses of the Church's doctrinal traditions and from the angles imposed by apologetic considerations, may be shaped into some sort of whole. Any such *Christian* narrative, however, will have certain features. It will tell the story of *redemption*, that is, of humankind's movement or possibility of movement from a state of deprivation to a state described by the word "salvation." Central to this narrative will be the story of *Jesus*. And the climax of the narrative, the point where the movement (or its possibility) from deprivation to salvation becomes reality, will be some particular aspect or event(s) of the story of Jesus, traditionally his Incarnation

and/or his passion and death.<sup>(1)</sup>

As Michael Root has pointed out in a recent essay, the soteriological task of Christian theology lies precisely in creating "narrative redescrptions of the story of Jesus . . . that make clear how it is the story of redemption."<sup>(2)</sup> He gives the following example illustrating both how these narrative redescrptions work, and how varied they can be:

There is a sense in which Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* and Gregory of Nyssa's *Catechetical Orations* contain descriptions of the same event, the death of Christ. Nevertheless, they find redemptive meaning in that death only by redescrbing it as the voluntary payment of a debt owed to the honor of God or as the deceptive surrender to the Devil in exchange for the souls of humanity. The redescrption is the soteriological explanation. The explanation succeeds only when it convincingly reconstitutes in its own image that which it explains. If I accept and understand the redescrption of the story of Jesus' death as the story of the repayment of an infinite debt, then I have had the soteriological significance of that death shown to me.<sup>(3)</sup>

It was the task of the Christian apologists in the *Dār al-Islām* to find narrative redescrptions of the story of Jesus Christ "and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2) that, as the key to the whole history of God's dealings with humankind, might meet with understanding and acceptance among Muslims. As we shall see, their redescrptions range from those in which echoes of Gregory may be heard to one in which Anselm is anticipated by some three centuries.

## I. Redemption as Christ's Victory over Satan

### A. Christ's Defeat of Satan in the Arabic Christian Apologies

#### 1. "On the Triune God": Satan's ascendancy and overthrow

One of the most striking Arabic "narrative redescrptions" of the story of Jesus is found in the oldest Arabic Christian apologetic text in our possession: the misnamed *Fī taṭlīṭ Allāh al-wāḥid* ("On the Triune God") of Sinai ar. 154, an

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1. The past century has seen considerable debate over the "and/or" of this last sentence. For the Greek Fathers, was the Incarnation *in itself* a saving event (so Harnack), or was it simply the background to the concrete saving acts of Christ's passion and death (so Rivière)? J.-P. Jossua has argued that neither view does justice to the thought of the Greek Fathers. Rather, for them the Incarnation is *itself* the source of salvation working through and *only* through Christ's death and resurrection. See JOSSUA, *Salut* (1968), esp. 33–44.
  2. ROOT, "Soteriology" (1989), 267. These "narrative redescrptions" are what have traditionally been labelled "atonement theories," but Root argues that the label is incorrect: "explanations of soteriology are not theoretical" (ibid., p. 276), but rather *narrative* in character.
  3. Ibid, 267.

eighth-century text preserved in an early ninth-century manuscript.<sup>(4)</sup> At the very beginning of the anonymous author's apology for the Incarnation<sup>(5)</sup> he gives the reader an outline of the way in which he will tell the story of Jesus as the story of redemption, announcing that he will explain<sup>(6)</sup>

... كيف أرسل الله كلمته ونوره رحمة للناس وهدي<sup>٦</sup>،  
ومنّ عليهم به؛  
ولمّ نزل من السماء خلاصاً<sup>٧</sup> لآدم وذريته  
من إبليس وظلمته وضلالته.

#### TRANSLATION:

... how God sent his Word and Light as mercy and guidance to the people,  
and through him was gracious to them;  
and why he came down from heaven as salvation to Adam and his descendants  
from the Devil and his darkness and misguidance.<sup>(7)</sup>

The plot elements are set. The deprivation from which humanity is to be saved is the "darkness" and "misguidance" of the Devil in which it has been ensnared since the time of Adam. "Salvation" will come through the Devil's defeat at the hands of the incarnate Word of God.

Accordingly, the author begins his narrative with the story of the creation of Adam and of Eve, their fall through the Devil's guile, and their expulsion from the Garden -- a biblical story with a Qur'ānic parallel in *al-Baqarah* (2):35-36. The author is faithful to specifically *Christian* teaching, however, in asserting that Adam and Eve bequeathed rebellion, sin, and death to their descendants in such a way that no one -- "neither a prophet, nor anyone else" -- was able to deliver them.<sup>(8)</sup> He then turns to

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4. For the section that follows, I am indebted to Fr. Samir Khalil Samir for making available to me his yet unpublished edition of the treatise.
  5. The section to be summarized here is found in Sinai ar. 154, ff. 102<sup>v</sup>/15-108<sup>r</sup>/12; GIBSON, *Treatise* (1899), 78\*/22-84\*/11, with *lacunae*; Samir's unpublished edition, #110-271. In the discussion below I shall give references to Sinai ar. 154, with references to Mrs. Gibson's historically important but now inadequate edition in parentheses. The Arabic texts reproduced below reflect my own reading of the MS, and editorial notes refer solely to it.
  6. f. 102<sup>v</sup>/15-19 (p. 78\*/23-25).
  7. The *ẓulmah* and *ḍalālah* ("darkness and misguidance") of Satan mirror the pair *nūr* and *hudā* ("light and guidance") with which the Word has just been described, and which the Qur'an predicates of revelation. See, e.g., *al-Mā'idah* (5):15-16, 44, 46 referring respectively to the revelations bestowed upon Muḥammad, Moses, and Jesus.

While *ḍalālah* is normally translated "error," in the present context it has an active, causative sense, the exact opposite of "guidance."

8. لمّ يستطيع [كذا] أحد من الناس، نبياً [كذا] ولا غيره، أن يخلص ذرية آدم من المعصية والخطية والموت f. 103<sup>r</sup>/15-17 (p. 79\*/12-14). The author does not venture an explanation of *how* Adam and Eve bequeathed rebellion, sin, and death to their descendants.

the subsequent Old Testament history. Emphasizing humankind's stubborn inclination towards the worship and the works of Satan, he weaves into his narrative precisely those biblical stories that figure most prominently among the Qur'ān's "punishment stories": God's sending the flood upon unbelieving humanity, while saving Noah and those with him in the ark; God's sending the rain of fire and brimstone upon the inhabitants of Sodom for their abominable deeds, while delivering Lot and his daughters; God's drowning of pharaoh and his hosts at the sea, while bringing the children of Israel through it to safety.<sup>(9)</sup>

But despite the mercy of God to the children of Israel, continues the author, they returned to the worship of Satan -- this *despite* the mission of the prophets and apostles:<sup>(10)</sup>

1 فغلب الشيطان على بني إسرائيل وعلى الناس كلهم،

وأفقرهم،

وطغاهم،

واتخذ الناس عبيداً<sup>n</sup> من دون الله.

2 فأفنتهم،

وأضلّهم بكلّ عمل خبيث،

وألّب<sup>(1)</sup> الناس على أنبياء الله ورسله،

وعمى<sup>3</sup> قلوبهم ألا يفهموا<sup>(2)</sup> كلام أنبياء الله؛

3 فمنهم من قتلوه،

ومنهم من رجموه،

ومنهم من كذبوه.

4 وظهر عمل إبليس وضلالته في كلّ أمة وكلّ قوم . . .

(1) MS يولّب. (2) MS يفهمون.

#### TRANSLATION:

- 1 And Satan gained ascendancy over the children of Israel and over all the people,  
impoverished them,  
oppressed them,  
and took them as slaves, separated from God.

9. For the Qur'ānic references see above, p. 148, notes 270, 272, and 273.

10. f. 105<sup>r</sup>/9-16 (81\*/17-22; #175-79).

- 2 And he seduced them,  
led them astray into every wicked deed,  
incited the people against God's prophets and apostles,  
and blinded their hearts,  
so as not to comprehend the speech of God's prophets;
- 3 and some they killed,  
and some they stoned,  
and some they called liars.
- 4 And the work and the misguidance of the Devil  
appeared among every community and nation . . .

Humanity's condition was desperate, but God was merciful. Responsive to the pleas of His prophets who recognized that no one from *among the people* could save Adam's descendants, God decided to act *Himself* for their salvation. But rather than simply undoing the Devil by divine *fiat* -- a defeat in which "the Devil would not have experienced distress or regret," given God's omnipotence!<sup>(11)</sup> -- God decided to overthrow the Devil "by means of this humanity which had been seduced and deemed weak."<sup>(12)</sup> And therefore God sent *His Word*, who "put on this weak, defeated humanity from Mary the Good, whom God had chosen 'above the women of the worlds,' and veiled himself through her."<sup>(13)</sup> (Once again we note the Qur'ānic echoes,<sup>(14)</sup> which are heard in connection with Mary again some paragraphs later when the author relates the story of the annunciation.<sup>(15)</sup>) Veiled in humanity, the Word overcame the Devil!<sup>(16)</sup>

1 فخلّص آدم وذريّته من ضلالة إبليس،  
وأقام آدم من عثرته؛  
2 وشفى<sup>٩</sup> قرحته،  
وجدد<sup>١٠</sup> بلاءه،  
وجبر صدّعه؛

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11. لم يكن إبليس يجد الحسرة والندامة f. 106<sup>v</sup>/18–19 (83\*/10). The same idea is found in *al-Burhān* of Peter of Bayt Ra's (CACHIA, *Demonstration* (1960–61), I, 127 (#225)). Indeed, there are many parallels to "On the Triune God" in Book I of *al-Burhān*, where the story of redemption is told with more theological sophistication but less narrative verve.
  12. بهذا الإنسان الذي أفتن واستضعف f. 106<sup>v</sup>/9–10 (p. 83\*/3).
  13. وليس هذا الإنسان الضعيف المتهور من مريم الطيبة، التي اصطفاها الله على نساء العالمين، فاحتجب بها f. 106<sup>v</sup>/13–15 (p. 83\*/5–6).
  14. Cf. *Āl 'Imrān* (3):37.
  15. Mary's response to Gabriel's greeting, ولم يمسنني [أقرأ: يمسنني] بشر؟ ("How shall I have a son, and no man has touched me?" f. 107<sup>v</sup>/2 (p. 83\*/13–14)) is an almost exact citation of *Maryam* (19):20.
  16. ff. 107<sup>v</sup>/15–108<sup>r</sup>/4 (missing in Gibson's edition).

- 3 وأنقذه وذريته من يدي إبليس،  
وأبطل ظلمته وطغيانه،  
وفك رقابنا من عبادة الشيطان؛  
4 وصلب الخطيئة بصلبه،  
وأما الموت (الذي ورث آدم بالمعصية) بموته،  
وأظهر [f. 108<sup>r</sup>] القيامة؛  
5 وأقام الحق،  
والبر،  
والهدى،  
برحمته،  
ومنه على الناس وعلى خلق الله،  
ونوره في الناس؛  
6 وبيّن لهم عظمتهم،  
وأعلمهم أن يعبدوا<sup>(1)</sup> الله وكلمته وروحه،  
إله واحد، وربّ واحد.

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(1) MS يعبدون.

#### TRANSLATION:

- 1 He saved Adam and his descendants from the Devil's misguidance,  
and raised Adam from his stumbling.
- 2 He healed his wound,  
renewed his decrepit condition,  
and repaired his brokenness.
- 3 He rescued him and his descendants from the hands of the Devil,  
did away with his darkness and tyranny,  
and emancipated us [lit. "our necks"] from the service of Satan.
- 4 He crucified sin by his crucifixion,  
killed death (which Adam inherited through trespass) by his death,  
and showed forth the resurrection.
- 5 He established truth,  
righteousness,  
and guidance,  
by his mercy,  
his gracious favor towards the people and towards God's creation,  
and his light among the people.
- 6 He taught them to worship God (*Allāh*) and His Word and His Spirit,  
one God (*ilāh*) and one Lord.

## 2. "On the Triune God," the tradition, and Arabic apologetics

Using a rich and allusive language frequently of Qur'ānic inspiration, the anonymous author of "On the Triune God" describes redemption as being rescued from Satan's dominance and all its ill effects – brokenness, slavery, bondage to sin and death – and being brought to salvation: wholeness, freedom, deliverance from sin and death, enlightenment, and the worship of the true God. This is accomplished by the Incarnation of the Word of God: Satan is overthrown and reduced to weakness and ignominy through the very humanity he had overthrown, weakened, and vaunted over. Furthermore, according to the author, the victory is won specifically *through the crucifixion*: Christ "crucified sin by his crucifixion" and "killed death . . . by his death."

### (a) *The role of Satan*

One of the striking features of the story of redemption told in *Fī taṭlīṭ Allāh al-wāḥid* is the prominent role played in the plot by Satan (*al-Ṣayṭān*, or *Iblīs* = ὁ διάβολος). This, of course, is by no means new in the history of Christian apologetics. Important patterns for much of subsequent Christian soteriology were set in the *Adversus haereses* of St. Irenaeus of Lyon (d. ca. 200), who taught that Christ's obedience "recapitulates" Adam's disobedience: whereas Adam's *disobedience* resulted in sin and death, destroyed fellowship with God, impaired the image and likeness of God in human beings, and brought about humanity's fall under the yoke of Satan, Christ's *obedience* led to life and immortality, the re-establishment of fellowship with God, the restoration of the image and likeness of God in human beings, and the defeat of Satan.<sup>(17)</sup> For Irenaeus and many after him, the (disobedient) Adam/(obedient) Christ parallel provided a framework for narrating the story of Jesus as the story of redemption; by imaginatively developing parallels between the story of Adam's disobedience and that of Christ's obedience, a considerable amount of biblical material could be brought into an aesthetically satisfying, "recapitulatively" harmonious plot.<sup>(18)</sup>

It is important to note that in the establishment of this recapitulative harmony *Satan* comes to play a role in the story of redemption far more prominent than the

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17. This summary is taken from KELLY, *Doctrines* (1977), 169–74.

18. An example may be helpful. Proclus of Constantinople, in a sermon preserved in an Arabic version in the ninth-century manuscript Strassbourg or. 4226, describes the redemptive value of Christ's death by matching: the crucifixion of Christ and the transgression of Adam [by means of a tree]; Christ's nakedness and Adam's "taking off" his glory in the Garden; Christ's nailed hands and Adam's hands gathering the forbidden fruit; Christ's nailed feet and the feet which "descended from Jerusalem to Jericho" [Luke 10:30]; Christ's crucifixion between thieves and the one who "fell among thieves upon the way"; Christ's being pierced by the lance and the lance of the cherubim guarding paradise, now broken. See LEROY, *Homilétique* (1967), 220.

limited frequency of his appearances in the Bible might seem to warrant. For example, if Satan is not quite absent from the New Testament passion narratives,<sup>(19)</sup> he is not explicitly prominent in them. In "recapitulative" shapings of the biblical narrative, however, the episodes to be brought into harmony shape and reshape one another through a process of mutual assimilation in which any feature plausibly deemed to be common to the episodes gains in importance to the unifying plot. Through the pairing and mutual assimilation of the story of Christ's rejection of Satan's temptations in the wilderness with that of Adam's hearkening to the serpent in the Garden,<sup>(20)</sup> and then of the story of Adam's fall by means of a tree with that of Christ's death on the cross,<sup>(21)</sup> Satan's role "spread" throughout the network of stories until he came to be *the* great antagonist whose "rise and fall" is a major plot element binding together this particular way of telling the story of redemption.

The author of "On the Triune God" is heir to this soteriological tradition, but he makes use of it in his own way. He does not indulge in the highly elaborate Adam/Christ, tree/cross parallels in which many Christians delighted but which he probably judged as being uninteresting or implausible to Muslims.<sup>(22)</sup> Instead, he simply tells the story of Satan's seduction of Adam and Eve, his enslavement of humanity, and his defeat by the incarnate Word of God; but through the skillful use of Qur'ānic vocabulary and snatches of Qur'ānic narrative, he does it in such a way as to be appealing to a Qur'ānicly formed imagination.

#### (b) *The deception of Satan*

The Christian soteriological tradition that narrated redemption as Christ's victory over Satan frequently saw that victory as the fruit of *a divine deception*: through the Incarnation, Christ's divinity was kept hidden from Satan so that he would be lured into the misstep that would undo him. A famous statement of this tradition is found in the catechetical lectures of Gregory of Nyssa, who used the striking image of Christ's humanity as the "bait" concealing the "fishhook" of the

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19. E.g., Luke 4:13 looks forward not only to Judas' betrayal (22:3–6) but also to Gethsemane (22:40–46) and Golgotha (23:37).

20. *Adversus haereses* V, 21–24 (ROUSSEAU, *Hérésies* (1969), 260–307). This pairing appears a number of times in the Arabic Christian texts studied here. See, for example, Chapter 17, Question 24 of *al-Ġāmī' wuḡūh al-īmān*, on the temptation of Christ (BL or. 4950, f. 109<sup>r</sup> v): if Adam was defeated by Satan through the desire for food, Christ triumphed over Satan by *abstaining* from food. (Similarly in Chapter 8, BL or. 4950, f. 36<sup>r</sup>.) See also Abū Qurrah's Greek *opusculum* 1, P.G. 97, 1461–64.

21. *Adversus haereses* V, 16, 3 (ROUSSEAU, *Hérésies* (1969), 218–21).

22. I am reminded of *Cur Deus homo* I, 3–4 (ROQUE, *Dieu* (1963), 220–23), where Anselm mentions the disobedience/obedience, Eve/Mary, and tree/cross parallels only to be told by Boso — representing the *infideles*, here the Muslims (see below, pp. 222–23) — that these parallels are beautiful but not particularly convincing.

divinity: Satan greedily seized the bait – and was himself hooked and taken.<sup>(23)</sup>

This concept lies in the background of the account of redemption found in "On the Triune God," even though the author is restrained in his use of the vocabulary of deception. We note, however, his use of the verb *ihtağaba*: the Word of God "veiled himself" through the Virgin Mary in order to take on the Devil,<sup>(24)</sup> echoing Gregory's teaching that God's "divinity was hidden by the veil of our nature"<sup>(25)</sup> so that He might accomplish His strategem (ἀπάτη) against the Devil.<sup>(26)</sup> Furthermore, ideas that lay unobtrusively in the background in "On the Triune God" are stated openly by later apologists,<sup>(27)</sup> for example, by Peter of Bayt Ra's in the following passage from Book I of *al-Burhān*:<sup>(28)</sup>

- 1 لذلك دبرت كلمة الله خلطتها بالناسوت بأتم العدل  
مع تمام الرحمة والقدرة.
- 2 فمكرت ببليس  
كما مكر بآدم،  
وكان «خير الماكرين».
- 3 واحتجبت ببشر آدمي  
كما احتجب إبليس لآدم ببشر الحية.
- 4 وخدعته بمولدها من البشر من مريم العذراء  
كما خدع آدم بكلامه حواء وهي عذراء.

23. *Or. catech.* XXIV, 4 (MÉRIDIÉ, *Discours* (1908), 114–15). For a good recent discussion of the theme of the deception of the devil in Gregory and others of the Fathers, see SCHWAGER, "Sieg Christi" (1981), 158–68.

24. See above, p. 155.

25. τῷ προκαλύμματι τῆς φύσεως ἡμῶν ἐνεκρύφθη τὸ θεῖον, *Or. catech.* XXIV, 4 (MÉRIDIÉ, *Discours* (1908), 114–15), and see also XXIII, 3 (MÉRIDIÉ, *Discours* (1908), 110–11).

The verb *ihtağaba* is ambiguous, since in the case of God a "veiling" may be a revealing as well as a concealing; see below, p. 186, note 111. Here, however, the emphasis is clearly on concealing.

26. *Or. catech.* XXIV, 4, XXVI, 1 (MÉRIDIÉ, *Discours* (1908), 114–15, 118–21).

27. In "On the Necessity of Redemption" Theodore Abū Qurrah states that Isaiah foresaw Christ's Incarnation, "and the hiding of the majesty of his divinity, so that Satan would make bold against him" (هذا قول إشعيا فيه، حيث رأى تجسده، وإخفاء جلال لاهوته، ليجترئ عليه الشيطان); BACHA, *Mayāmīr* (1904), 87/1–2. See also his "On the Possibility of the Incarnation," *ibid.*, 184/19–185/4. The author of *al-Ġāmi'* compares Christ's Incarnation with a shepherd's disguising himself in a sheepskin in order to defeat the wolf in Ch. 8 (BL or. 4950, f. 34<sup>v</sup>) and again in Ch. 17, Q. 19 (BL or. 4950, f. 106<sup>v</sup>–107<sup>r</sup>).

28. CACHIA, *Demonstration* (1960–61), I, 127 (#226).

5 وصرعته<sup>٣</sup> وأصحابه يعود الصليب  
كما صرع آدم وامراته يعود الفردوس.

Superscript <sup>٣</sup> indicates that Cachia's edition gives the masculine form as found in the *corrections* to Sinai ar. 75. The manuscript evidence, however, indicates that the author treated كلمة الله ("Word of God") as grammatically feminine.

TRANSLATION:

- 1 For that reason the Word of God arranged his mingling with humanity  
with the most perfect justice,  
and with perfect mercy and power.
- 2 Thus he devised a strategem (*makarat*) against the Devil  
just as the Devil had devised a strategem against Adam,  
and he is "the best of devisers."
- 3 He veiled himself (*iḥṭāḡabat*) in Adamic flesh  
just as the Devil veiled himself from Adam in the flesh of the serpent.
- 4 He tricked him (*ḥada'athu*) by his fleshly birth from Mary the virgin,  
just as he tricked Adam by his speech with Eve when she was a virgin.
- 5 He threw him and his adherents down (*ṣara'athu*) by the wood of the cross,  
just as he threw down Adam and his wife by the wood of Paradise.

Peter uses the language of deception without embarrassment, and makes explicit an expectation or hope that the author of "On the Triune God" had left implicit: that Christian soteriology done in this way might prove appealing to the imaginations of those who exulted in God "the best of devisers" (*Āl 'Imrān* (3):54, *al-Anfāl* (8):30), ready to work deception in order to vindicate His message and its bearers.<sup>(29)</sup>

(c) *What does the crucifixion accomplish, and how?*

At the end of the passage just cited, Peter states that the Word of God was victorious over the Devil "by the wood of the cross." The Arabic apologies, in continuity with earlier soteriological tradition, insisted that the crucifixion was central to the cunning victory won by Christ. As we have seen, the author of "On the Triune God" wrote that Christ "crucified sin by his crucifixion" and "killed death . . . by his death." And if the centrality of the crucifixion to Christ's saving work is mentioned only in passing in the part of "On the Triune God" summarized above, it is strongly emphasized in the final section of the treatise.<sup>(30)</sup> There, it is by means of the crucifixion of Christ that "he redeemed us from the misguidance of the Devil and his

29. See above, pp. 148–50.

30. Passage on the cross in Sinai ar. 154, ff. 137<sup>r</sup>–139<sup>v</sup> (lacking in Gibson's ed.).

works."<sup>(31)</sup> "Christ . . . crucified sin and destroyed the Devil by his crucifixion."<sup>(32)</sup> "Christ was crucified for the salvation of Adam and his descendants from death and sin."<sup>(33)</sup> "The mark of Christ is the cross, by which he overthrew the Devil and destroyed his authority."<sup>(34)</sup> The author's whole vocabulary of redemption is here brought into explicit connection with the crucifixion.

Similarly, the author of *al-Ġāmī' wuḡūh al-īmān* teaches that the fatal misstep into which Satan was lured was precisely that of having Christ put to death. Responding to the question "Why do Christians kiss the cross and prostrate themselves to it?" he writes:<sup>(35)</sup>

- 1 ونسجد له خاصّة  
لأنّ الشيطان هو الذي هيّأه للمسيح ربّنا، التماس هلاكه؛  
فانقلب الأمر بحكمة المسيح إلى خلاف تعبته!
- 2 وكان هدم سلطان الشيطان لا أشدّ منه عاراً،  
لأنّ الشيطان افتخر بحكمته،  
حيث صرع بحيلته آدم الذي خُلق بصورة الله،  
فاستولى بذلك على العالم كلّهُ.
- 3 فنحن نُبرز علامة الصليب نحوّ الشيطان تعبيراً لجهله،  
لأنّ خلاصنا من عبوديته إنّما جرى بسعّيه!
- 4 فيفرّ منه خائزاً، هارباً؛  
لا يقدر أن ينظر إليه البتّة، بل يهرب منه.

#### TRANSLATION:

- 1 And we only prostrate ourselves to it [the cross]  
because it was Satan who readied it for Christ our Lord, seeking his destruction;  
but in Christ's wisdom the tables were turned,  
[and the outcome was] the contrary of what he had arranged!
- 2 The demolition of Satan's authority could not have been more shameful,  
because Satan had boasted in his wisdom,  
inasmuch as he had thrown down Adam, created in God's image, by a trick,  
thereby making himself master of the entire world.
- 3 Therefore we brandish the sign of the cross before Satan, reviling his ignorance,  
because our salvation from bondage to him only came to pass  
through his [own] effort!
- 4 And he runs away from it, a contemptible fugitive;  
he is not able to look upon it at all, but rather flees from it.

31. . . . الذي فداانا به من ضلالة إبليس وأعماله. f. 137<sup>r</sup>/14-15.

32. المسيح . . . صلب الخطيّة وأهلك إبليس بصلبه. f. 137<sup>v</sup>/7-9.

33. إنّ المسيح صُلب من أجل خلاص آدم وذريّته من الموت والخطيّة. f. 137<sup>v</sup>/12-14.

34. وإنّما سيمّة المسيح الصليب، الذي به أكب إبليس وأهلك سلطانه. f. 139<sup>v</sup>/7-10.

35. In Chapter 18, #8; BL or. 4950, f. 120<sup>v</sup>/2-10

It was by seeking Christ's destruction on the cross that Satan overreached himself and was in his turn tricked and thrown down, his boasting turned to shame.

If the authors of *Fī taṭlīṭ Allāh al-wahid*, *al-Ġāmi' wuḡūh al-īmān*, and *al-Burhān* all insist *that* it is through the cross that Christ's cunning victory over the Devil was won, they do not explain *how* this could have been the case.<sup>(36)</sup> Turning back to the tradition, we do find attempts to answer this challenging *how*. In his catechetical lectures, Gregory of Nyssa explained that Christ's death was *a ransom paid to the Devil* for the release of the souls he held captive. The Devil, seeing Christ's surpassing excellence in all things but unaware of the divinity that had been hidden from him, accepted the ransom to his own ruin.<sup>(37)</sup> This idea of a ransom paid to the Devil rapidly passed out of favor as a result of the critique of Gregory of Nazianzen,<sup>(38)</sup> but other elements of the narrative of Satan's deception had considerable staying power. Sometimes they were recombined to produce what Western historians of doctrine have called the "theory" of *the Devil's abuse of power*: God had accorded the Devil the right to put human beings to death because of their free disobedience, but the Devil overstepped his right in attacking Jesus, who was without sin. Therefore God acted in perfect justice when He punished the Devil for this abuse of power by stripping him of his captives.<sup>(39)</sup>

We find a clear statement of the "theory" of Satan's "abuse of power" among the writings attributed to Theodore Abū Qurrah, but only in the Greek *opusculum* 1 which is best considered a (somewhat awkward) compilation of "Abū Qurran" materials.<sup>(40)</sup> There the author explains that human beings freely disobeyed God and offered their obedience to the Devil, and for that reason God justly gave them over to the Devil's tyranny. But then "Christ deceived<sup>(41)</sup> our adversary, who put him to death unjustly; and through this unjust death he took the Devil himself captive, and all the slaves in his hands."<sup>(42)</sup> The author goes on to explain this by means of a little allegory involving a good king and a rebellious subject who seduced many others into disobedience to the king and submission to his own tyrannical rule. The good king justly refrained from stripping the tyrant of his servants, despite his capacity to do so, because of their voluntary submission to him. However, the king heard the tormented cries of these servants, and in pity sent his son, clothed as one of his subjects, to encounter the tyrant. The king's son enraged the tyrant by his refusal to

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36. The paragraph reproduced above from *al-Burhān* of Peter of Bayt Ra's is followed by others which explain the soteriological significance of Christ's death — but in terms *other* than those of his deception of and victory over the Devil. See CACHIA, *Demonstration* (1960–61), I, 127–29 (#227–29).

37. *Or. catech.* XXII–XXVI (MÉRIDIÉ, *Discours* (1908), 106–27).

38. *Or.* XLV, 22 (PG 36, 653–54).

39. See RIVIÉRE, *Rédemption* (1905), 396–97, with citations from John Chrysostom and Cyril of Alexandria.

40. See RIVIÉRE, "Précurseur" (1914), 359.

41. ἐδελέασεν, lit. "enticed as bait (δέλεαρ)."

42. PG 97, 1465A [FT RIVIÉRE, "Précurseur" (1914), 353].

hearken to him, to the point that the tyrant crossed the river dividing their domains and murdered him. Then the good king justly deprived the tyrant of *all* that had been his, since he had unjustly shed royal blood.<sup>(43)</sup> While this explanation possesses a fair degree of narrative coherence, it does not seem to have caught on among arabophone Christian apologists. Theodore himself quarries other parts of the tradition for the materials for his specifically *apologetic, Muslim-directed* doctrine of redemption.<sup>(44)</sup>

If the arabophone apologists we have encountered seem to have been quite unconcerned to tie up the loose ends of the plot of the story of Satan's defeat, this was by no means unprecedented. As Melkites, they could all look back to John of Damascus as an authority. In the paragraphs on redemption in his *De fide orthodoxa*, the Damascene drew heavily on the catechetical lectures of Gregory of Nyssa but explicitly rejected the notion of a ransom paid to the Devil, replacing it with a rather vague assertion about the victory of light over darkness and life over destruction.<sup>(45)</sup> Thus he avoided a questionable theologoumenon, but left unclear precisely *how* God's just and fitting victory-through-deception over darkness and destruction was achieved.

(d) *A careful summary by a Muslim*

In addition to the Arabic Christian texts that we have been examining, we possess an excellent *Islamic* witness to the way in which arabophone Christians told the story of Christ's cunning defeat of the Devil: the rhymed *Kitāb al-radd 'alā l-Naṣārā* of al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm. In the following passage, written with an objectivity rare to either side of the Christian-Muslim controversy, he describes the Christian story of redemption as he understood it:<sup>(46)</sup>

- 1 وقالت فرق النصارى كلها، مع اختلافها وافتراق أقوالها:
- 2 إن سبب نزول الابن الإلهي،  
الذي نزل من السماء رحمة للبشر ومحافظة على الرسل ولأنبياء،
- 3 (قالوا) من أجل خطيئة آدم.  
فإنه، لما أخطأ وأكل من الشجرة التي نهاه الله عنها فعصى،  
تبرأ الله (تبارك وتعالى!) منه،  
وأسلمه إلى الشيطان باتباعه له.

43. PG 97, 1465–68 [FT RIVIÈRE, "Précurseur" (1914), 353–54]. A similar allegory appears in *al-Burhān* of Peter of Bayt Ra's, but without any mention of a royal death. See CACHIA, *Demonstration* (1960–61), I, 133–34 (#238).

44. See below, pp. 211–23.

45. See *De fide orthodoxa* III, 1 and especially 27 (KOTTER, *Expositio* (1973), 107/28–36 and 170/4–17).

46. DI MATTEO, "Confutazione" (1921–22), 317/8–318/8.

- 4 (قالوا:) فكان في حيزّ الشيطان ودار مُلكه،  
وكذلك (زعموا) كان معه فيها جميع ولده،  
يحكم فيهم الشيطان بما أحبّ من حكمه.
- 5 (قالوا:) وكان فيما ملك الشيطان من آدم ونسله  
أنفس كثيرة من أنبياء الله ورسله،  
6 فمن تلك الأنفس نفس نوح ونفس إبراهيم،  
وغيرهما من أنفس الرسل والأنبياء.
- 7 (قالوا:) فتلطّف الابن واحتال  
لاستخراج تلك الأنفس من يد الشيطان،  
فلبس لذلك ومن أجله جسداً آدمياً،  
ليكون بما لبس منه عن الشيطان خفياً.
- 8 فتنكر الابن بذلك له  
لكي لا يحترس الشيطان منه،  
فلا ينفذ فيه مكره.
- 9 (قالوا:) فلما غلب على الناس الخطيئة،  
وحلّت فيهم البليّة،  
10 واستبان لآدم (زعموا) ما فعل الشيطان به،  
وما كان من غروره إيّاه،  
وخديعته له؛
- 11 خدع عند ذلك الابن الشيطان بمكره،  
فبلغ فيه ما أراد من أمره،  
12 فاستخرج آدم وجميع ولده  
من سلطان الشيطان ويده.
- 13 (قالوا:) وذلك كلّهُ، فإنّما كان الابن يبذل نفسه للصلب،  
ولما لقي من الأذى قبله والنصب،  
14 إحساناً من الابن إلينا وكرماً،  
ورأفةً من الابن بنا ورحمة.
- 15 (قالوا:) فاشتري الابن البشر من أبيه  
بما وصل من الأذى والصلب إليه.
- 16 وذلك (زعموا) أنّ أباه لم يكن في حكمه وعدله  
أن يظلم الشيطان ما جعل له من آدم وولده،

- 17 إن صاروا إلى طاعة الشيطان وأمره، لأنّه قال  
للشيطان (فيما يزعمون من المقال):  
18 «كُلْ مَنْ اتَّبَعَكَ،  
فهو لك.»
- 19 (قالوا:) فلذلك اشترانا الابن من أبيه بالعدل،  
وغلب الشيطان على ما كان في يده منّا بالمكر.
- 20 فلما استخرج آدم ونفوس الرسل والأنبياء،  
صعد بعد فراغه من معاملة الشيطان إلى السماء،  
21 بعد أربعين يوماً مرّت به  
بعد الذي كان من صلبه.
- 22 (قالوا:) فجلس عن يمين أبيه،  
تأمّاً بكليّته وجسده،
- 23 وجميع ما فيه من اللاهوت والناسوت،  
وكلّ ما كان فيهما ولهما من النعوت.
- 24 (قالوا:) وسينزل أيضاً مرّةً أخرى،  
فيدين الأحياء والأموات عند فناء الدنيا.

#### TRANSLATION:<sup>(47)</sup>

1 All the sects of the Christians, despite their difference and the distinctiveness of their doctrines, say:

2 The reason for the descent of the divine Son, who came down from heaven to show mercy to humankind and to uphold the apostles and prophets, 3 was the sin of Adam. When he erred by eating of the tree which God had forbidden to him, and thus disobeyed, God (may He be blessed and exalted!) relieved Himself of responsibility for him (*tabarra'a minhu*), and turned him over to Satan because he had followed him. 4 He was in Satan's possession and domain, and likewise all his progeny with him, Satan ruling over them in any way he pleased. 5 And among those over whom Satan ruled, from among Adam and his descendants, were many souls of the prophets and apostles of God, 6 including the soul of Noah, and the soul of Abraham, and other souls of the apostles and prophets.

7 Then the Son had compassion, and resorted to artifice (*ihtāla*) in order to recover those souls from the hand of Satan. For that purpose he put on (*labisa*) a human (*Ādamī*) body, in order to be hidden from Satan by means of what he put on. 8 And thus the Son disguised himself from him (*tanakkara lahu*), so that Satan should not be on his guard against him and avoid being "hooked" by his stratagem (*makr*) [lit. "and his strategem not pierce him"].

47. I do not attempt to reproduce al-Qāsim's rhyme or line structure, but arrange the translation in normal English paragraphs. For the sake of clarity, I leave untranslated al-Qāsim's repeated قالوا ("they say"), زعموا ("they claim"), and the like, by which he makes it perfectly clear that this is not his doctrine, and that he does not approve of it.

9 When sin had gained ascendancy over the people and affliction visited them, 10 and Adam clearly saw what Satan had done to him and what had come of his deceit and trickery (*ḥadī'ah*) with regard to him, 11 then the Son tricked (*ḥada'a*) Satan with his stratagem, achieved with it what he intended, 12 and recovered Adam and all his progeny from the authority and hand of Satan.

13 All of that, and the Son gave himself up to crucifixion and the injury and distress that he endured before it 14 out of his beneficence and generosity to us, and his pity and mercy upon us.

15 The Son purchased humanity from his Father by means of the injury and crucifixion that came upon him. 16 This [was necessary] because it was not consistent with the wisdom and justice of his Father that He deprive Satan of what had been granted to him, Adam and his progeny, 17 if they went over to the obedience of Satan and his affair, because He had said to Satan, 18 "Everyone who follows you is yours." 19 Therefore the Son purchased us from his Father justly (*bi-l-'adl*), and plundered Satan of those of us whom he possessed by means of a stratagem (*bi-l-makr*).

20 When he had recovered Adam and the souls of the apostles and prophets, and after he had finished dealing with Satan, he ascended into heaven, 21 after forty days had passed from that of his crucifixion. 22 And he sat at the right [hand] of his Father, perfect in his [divine] entirety and his body, 23 and all the divinity (*lāhūt*) and humanity (*nāsūt*) that are in him, with all the properties (*nu'ūr*) the two possess. 24 And he will come down again, and shall judge the living and the dead at the passing of the world.

al-Qāsim's description of the "ecumenically-agreed" soteriological discourse of Christians in the *Dār al-Islām* is almost entirely free of polemic. It is only in his description of God "relieving Himself of responsibility" for Adam (#3), or in the stress he places on God's apostles and prophets being held captive by Satan (#5-6), that we clearly sense his disapproval;<sup>(48)</sup> otherwise, he gives us an excellent description of how Christians narrated redemption as the story of the deception and defeat of Satan by the Son of God. In al-Qāsim's account, there is no reserve about the vocabulary of deception: the Son of God resorted to artifice (*iḥtāla*), disguised himself (*tanakkara*), and tricked (*ḥada'a*) Satan by means of a stratagem (*makr*) (#7-12). Furthermore, it is clear that this stratagem comes to its climax and completion in the Son's passion and death (#13-19).

But once again, the question remains: *how* was this the case? al-Qāsim gives what may be recognized as fragments of explanations. For example, he reports that God had allowed Satan's claim on those who rebelled and followed him (#3, 17-18), and that it was not consonant with His justice that He simply deprive Satan of those who were his (#16). We might then expect to read that Christ deceived Satan either into accepting a ransom or into overstepping the limits of his just claim, but instead we find that the Son purchased humanity, not from Satan, but from *God the Father* (#15, 19). It is not at all clear how these ideas fit together. If the souls of Adam and his progeny were justly Satan's, how could they be freed through a purchase from the Father?

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48. On this point, see below, pp. 168–70.

There is no reason to assume that al-Qāsim was being unfair in his presentation. His statement that the Son purchased humanity from the Father reflects not only the common Christian conception of the death of Christ as a sacrifice offered to the Father,<sup>(49)</sup> but also and especially the rejection of the discredited idea of a ransom paid to the Devil.<sup>(50)</sup> If we credit al-Qāsim with a high degree of objectivity, however, we must then assume that he had not heard a clear and internally consistent explanation of the "mechanism" of the strategem by means of which Christ plundered Satan of those whom he possessed (#19). His summary of the Christian narrative of redemption, while written with remarkable objectivity, lays bare the story's incongruities and loose ends. These would provide easy targets for Muslim polemicists, as we shall soon see.

### 3. Concluding comments

It is clear that the narrative redescription of the story of Jesus as that of his cunning victory over Satan was popular among Christians living in the *Dār al-Islām* during the eighth and ninth Christian centuries. As we have seen from one of the oldest Arabic apologetic texts in our possession, "On the Triune God" of Sinai ar. 154, this story could be shaped with great artistry for presentation in a Qur'ānicly molded imaginative environment. For all its attractiveness, however, "On the Triune God" fails to explain *how* the ignominious death of crucifixion could, in actual fact, have been the decisive battle of Christ's victorious campaign against Satan. This failure is by no means an isolated case, to judge from the other texts we have examined. In the earliest Arabic Christian apologetic literature (as in a considerable amount of earlier Greek literature) the explanatory power of the narrative of redemption told as the story of Satan's deception and defeat faltered at the point of the crucifixion. If the Incarnation *per se* and various events in the life of Christ could easily be narratively redescribed as a cunning campaign against the Devil,<sup>(51)</sup> the crucifixion -- which all the apologists *asserted* to be climax of the campaign -- was not so readily absorbed into the narrative. Muslim controversialists were quick to perceive and exploit this.

Another difficulty may be mentioned. As Peter of Bayt Ra's made clear, the narrative of redemption studied here was a story of the Son's victory through *māk*, "a cunning device" or "stratagem," and was designed to appeal to the imaginations of Muslims who could exult in the Qur'ān's description of God as *ḥayr al-mākirīn*, "the

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49. On the background of this idea, see PELIKAN, *Emergence* (1971), 146.

50. Once again see John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa* III,27 (KOTTER, *Expositio* (1973), 170/4–17), where in a single paragraph we find the idea of Christ's self-offering to the Father, a vehement rejection of the notion that Christ's blood was offered to the Devil, and the image of death's swallowing the bait of the body and being caught on the fishhook of the divinity.

51. For such an interpretation of Christ's temptation and exorcisms, see Book I of *al-Burhān*, CACHIA, *Demonstration* (1960–61), I, 135–36 (#240–42).

best of devisers," ready to work deception in the defence of His apostles. In Chapter Three, however, we encountered a number of Christian apologists, among them Timothy and Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī, who indignantly *rejected* the notion that God could be the subject of *tašbīh* or in any way be a deceiver.<sup>(52)</sup> It is perhaps significant that Timothy and Ibrāhīm did *not* narrate redemption as a divine deception of Satan. The realization that there might be a contradiction between the critique of the *šubbiha lahum* on the one hand, and the story of Christ's deception of Satan on the other, may have been one factor motivating some arabophone Christian apologists to seek *other* ways in which to tell the story of redemption in the Islamic environment. We shall examine some of these ways in due course.

## B. The Islamic Critique of the Christian Story: Satan's Power, Christ's Defeat

A narrative of redemption such as that related in "On the Triune God" consists in three fundamental elements: a description of a state of deprivation, from which redemption is necessary; the narration of the redemptive act; and a description of the new state of "salvation" brought into being by this act. For "On the Triune God" (as well as a number of other Arabic Christian apologies) the state of deprivation is described as Satan's ascendancy over the whole of humanity as a result of the Fall. The redemptive act is the eternal Son's cunning deception of Satan, reaching its climax in the crucifixion. And the salvation brought about is described as one marked by the defeat of Satan, sin, and death.

At each step in the Christian narrative, Muslim polemicists professed themselves to be unconvinced, perplexed, or even shocked. We turn now to their arguments.

### 1. The background: Were God's apostles and prophets among Satan's captives?

The Christian narrative of redemption as Christ's victory over Satan described the state of deprivation from which Christ saved humanity in the direst terms (thereby making the salvation worked by Christ all the more glorious): as a result of the Fall, Satan made himself "master of the entire world."<sup>(53)</sup> Adam and all of his descendants fell into sin -- even Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Enoch, and Noah, as Theodore Abū Qurrah explained to an inquirer<sup>(54)</sup> -- and thus fell under sentence of death, their souls to be held captive by Satan.

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52. See above, pp. 137–38.

53. See above, p. 161 (#2).

54. If, that is, the passage from the Greek *opusculum* 1 (PG 97, 1463–64) does indeed originate in the work of Abū Qurrah.

For a number of Muslim writers the claim that before Christ Satan had taken captive "many souls of the prophets and apostles of God, including the soul of Noah and the soul of Abraham, and other souls of the apostles and prophets,"<sup>(55)</sup> was simply unthinkable. The author of the "Letter of 'Umar," for example, was eloquently scandalized:<sup>(56)</sup>

1 وزعمتم، من غرّتكم بالله وجهالتكم بأمره، أنّه من مات من النفوس منذ خلق آدم كانت عند إبليس، رأس الخطيئة، يُسلّط عليها ويُحكّم فيها، حتّى جاءه عيسى، فانتزعها منه، وغلبه عليها. 2 وكان في تلك النفوس نفس آدم ونوح وإبراهيم وموسى، وأنفس من أكرم الله من أنبيائه وصالح خلقه، الذين كانوا يطيعون الله ويعبدونه ويعملون له، ويعادون إبليس ويكفرون به!

3 أفما كان إبليس ليعذب تلك النفوس الصالحة، وقد قدر عليها بعد تركهم إياه وكفرهم به، ويرحم النفوس الكافرة التي كانت تعبدّه وتؤمن به وتعمل له؟ 4 ما كان الله (سبحانه وبحمده!) ليستخزن إبليس على أنفس أنبيائه وصالح خلقه الذين يعبدونه، ولا ليسلّطه عليهم؟ 5 وما كان الشيطان ليغلب الله على تلك النفوس؟ فأمن قدرة الله وسلطانه؟

6 سبحان الله! ما أضلّ من قال هذا بقدرته وسلطانه! «إنكم لفي قول مختلف يؤفّك عنه من أفك.»

#### TRANSLATION:

1 You have claimed, in your heedlessness with respect to God and your ignorance of His affair, that the souls of all who had died since the creation of Adam were with the Devil (*Iblis*), the chief of sin, who was given authority and made ruler over them until Jesus came, and snatched and wrested them away from him.

2 Among those souls were the souls of Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses, and the souls of those whom God had honored of the prophets and the righteous people of His creation, who had obeyed God, worshipped Him, striven on His behalf, and who had treated the Devil as an enemy and disbelieved in him!

3 How could it be that the Devil tormented those righteous souls, gaining power over them after they had renounced him and disbelieved in him, while he had mercy on the disbelieving souls who had worshipped him, believed in him, and striven on his behalf? 4 How could it be that God (may He be extolled in His praise!) asked the Devil to store up the souls of His prophets and the righteous ones of His creation who had worshipped Him, or gave him authority over them? 5 How could it be that Satan wrested these souls away from God? Is this consistent with the power and authority of God?

6 God be exalted [above such foolishness]! How deluded is the person who says this about the power and authority of God! "Surely you speak at variance; and perverted therefrom are some" [*al-Dāriyāt* (51):8-9].

55. See above, pp. 164-65 (#5-6).

56. SOURDEL, "Pamphlet" (1966), 28/13-22.

"Umar" mentions, in addition to Adam, the names of great (Old Testament) prophets and (Qur'ānic) apostles whose stories of divine *deliverance* are told in the Qur'ān: Noah, Abraham, Moses.<sup>(57)</sup> How, after delivering them from evildoers during their lifetime, could God have turned them over to Satan after their death?! For "Umar" and polemicists like him, the Christians' dire description of pre-Christian reality simply does not square with a Qur'ānic sense of God's timelessly and consistently just dealings with His servants. The Christian story of redemption as the drama of Satan's rise and fall assigns Satan far too grand a role, at the expense of God's apostles and prophets. Ultimately, it grants Satan this role at the expense of the dignity of God Himself.

## 2. The turning-point: who was defeated?

'Alī al-Ṭabarī had been a Nestorian Christian for some seventy years before converting to Islam during the reign of the caliph al-Mutawakkil. It is therefore no surprise that he could report the Christian story of redemption in terms reminiscent of "On the Triune God":<sup>(58)</sup>

- 1 منهم طائفة تزعم أنّ الله،  
لما رأى الشيطان قد علا شأنه،  
واستفحل أمره،  
وعجز الأنبياء عن مناولته،  
وجد ابناً له، أزلياً، قديماً،  
منفرداً بخلق الخلائق كلّها.
- 2 فدخل في بطن امرأة،  
ثم وُلد منها، ونشأ،  
وناهض الشيطان.
- 3 وأخذه الشيطان وقتله،  
ثم صلبه على يدي شرذمة من أحزابه!

### TRANSLATION:

- 1 A party of [the Christians]<sup>(59)</sup> claim that God,  
when he saw that Satan's prestige was rising,  
that his affair was getting out of control,  
and that the prophets were incapable of dealing with him,

57. See above, pp. 148–50.

58. In *al-Dīn wa-l-dawlah*, 'ĀDIL NUWAYHID, *Dīn* (1979), 208/1–5.

59. 'Alī presents this here as Jacobite doctrine, but he makes clear in a parallel passage in *al-Radd 'alā l-Naṣārā* that the story is essentially the same for all the Christian confessions: KHALIFÉ/KUTSCH, "Radd" (1959), 139/5–10.

- found for Himself an eternal Son,  
without parallel in all the creation.
- 2 And he entered the womb of a woman,  
was born from her and grew,  
and defied Satan.
- 3 And Satan took him and killed him,  
and crucified him at the hands of a small band of his partisans!

'Alī's polemical impulses are here under restraint; apart from the construction "God . . . found for Himself an eternal Son" there is nothing with which his Christian contemporaries would disagree, although they would of course extend the narrative to include the Son's victory. As 'Alī had come to understand the story, however, Christ's death "at the hands of a small band of [Satan's] partisans" was the *end* of the story. That is, to the extent to which 'Alī found the Christian narrative of Christ's struggle with Satan to be coherent, it is a story of ignominious defeat. He makes this perfectly clear in a number of places, especially in the following passage from *al-Radd 'alā l-Naṣārā*:<sup>(60)</sup>

- 1 وقد ذكروا أنّ سبب نزوله إنّما كان لحلّ الناس من أسر<sup>(1)</sup> الخطيّة،  
ثمّ زعموا أنّه صار، هو نفسه، أسيراً! 2 وجاء مغيباً للناس، فصار مستغيثاً  
بالله من الشيطان! 3 وجاء منقذاً للناس من الشيطان، واشتملته الأشرطة،  
لأنّ الشيطان كرّ عليه بعد ذلك، واختلسه، وافترسه، ودمدم عليه، ثمّ قتله!  
4 إنّ هذا القول لَمِمّا تكاد السموات أن تقع على الأرض من قُبْحِه،  
وتذهل الأنفس من شناعته!
- 5 وإنّ من عجب العجب اضطرار الخالق الأزليّ إلى أن أنزل ابنه  
الأزليّ من السماء، ثمّ يُرسله إلى الشيطان على يديّ روحه الأزليّة القاهرة  
ليمتحنه الشيطان ويهيّنه. 6 أو من ذا الذي أوجب عليه ذلك؟ وما كان  
دَرَكَه ودَرَكَ خلقه فيه؟ 7 وما حسب<sup>(2)</sup> أنّ هاجياً<sup>(3)</sup> هجا الله (تبارك وتعالى!)  
مذ قامت الدنيا، ولا مدّح الشيطان مادحاً، أكثر ممّا يقوله النصرانيّ من  
ذلك!
- 8 وذلك أنّ مدار الشريعة والتساويح، التي تقرأونها<sup>(4)</sup> في كلّ يوم، على  
أن الله وابنه وروحه صاروا إلى الشيطان، ومعهم الملائكة<sup>(5)</sup> والسمائيّون  
وخيار أهل الأرض أجمعين، 9 ونهضوا لمحاربة الشيطان وقمعه، وإبطال  
الخطيّة، ودفع الموت عن الناس كافّة. 10 فلم يلتقوا<sup>(6)</sup> ما أرادوا، بل  
زادوا الشيطان تمرداً واجترأ على الله وأمنأ من أخذه! 11 لأنّ الشيطان،  
لَمّا سلّم من أعدائه ودام على حاله، حلا له الجوّ، وصفا له الكدّر، وأفرج

عنه الرّوع؛ 12 ولأنّ الحزن انجلب على<sup>(7)</sup> ابن الله (فيما يقولون)، فصار أسيراً له،<sup>(8)</sup> قتيلاً.

(1) Ed. إصر. (2) Ed. أحسبت. (3) Ed. حاج. (4) Ed. تقرؤها. (5) Ed. المليكة. (6) The fifth form of the verb would be more usual. (7) Ed. عن. (8) Ed. لهم.

#### TRANSLATION:

1 [The Christians] relate that the reason for his descent was solely to release the people from the captivity of sin, but then they claim that he himself became a captive! 2 He came to help the people, but then cried out to God for help against Satan! 3 He came to rescue the people from Satan, but he was wrapped up in [his] cords, because Satan attacked him after that: he snatched and seized him as his prey, broke him, and finally killed him!

4 This doctrine is so foul that the heavens wellnigh fall upon the earth [cf. *Maryam* (19):90], and so repulsive that souls are in dismay!

5 It is a wonder of wonders that the eternal Creator should be obliged to send His eternal Son down from heaven, and then send him to Satan at the hands of His eternal conquering Spirit, in order that [Satan] should test and humiliate him.

6 Or, who [else] was it who obligated him to do this? What was His or His creation's gain from it? 7 I do not believe that anyone since the world was established has derided God (may He be blessed and exalted!) or praised Satan more than the Christians do in what they say about this!

8 That is because the central theme of the creed (*šarī'ah*) and the liturgy (*tasābiḥ*) that you recite every day is that God (*Allāh*) and His Son and His Spirit came to Satan, and with them the angels, the heavenly ones, and the best of all the folk of the earth. 9 They rose up to do battle with Satan and subdue him, to bring sin to nought, and to repel death from the people altogether. 10 But they did not obtain what they desired, but rather increased Satan's rebelliousness, his brazenness against God, and his security from seizure! 11 [This is] because when Satan safely escaped from his enemies and continued in his former condition, the air became sweet for him, his troubles cleared away, and he was released from his fear; 12 and because the distress [from which Satan escaped] was brought upon the Son of God (so they say), who became his captive and casualty.

As was the case with the Christians' description of the dire state of pre-Christian humanity, so it was with their narrative of the allegedly redemptive act: it makes too much of Satan, who, Christians claim (with relish, even) was *responsible for Christ's death*. As 'Alī's paraphrase has it, Satan swallowed Christ up like a ravening beast. But, 'Alī asks, how can this be? "They [the Christians] say one time that Jesus Christ is the eternal Creator, and then they claim that Satan overcame and killed him!"<sup>(61)</sup> And again, "How is it that Satan fled from the prophets and left them alone, but gained power over their Lord?"<sup>(62)</sup>

Christians had asserted that Christ's surrender to the cross prepared for him by Satan was the climax of a grand deception, but, as we have seen, they had not very

61. KHALIFÉ/KUTSCH, "Radd" فقالوا مرةً أنّ يسوع المسيح أزلّي خالق، ثمّ زعموا أنّ الشيطان غلبه وقتله! (1959), 139/1.

62. فكيف فرّ عنهم [الأنبياء] الشيطان فتركهم، وتمكّن من ربّهم؟ from the fragments of 'Alī's *Radd* preserved in the refutation of al-Šafī b. al-'Assāl, MURQUS ĠIRĠIS, *Ṣaḥā'ih* (1927–28), 94/15–16.

satisfactorily explained *how* this was so, *how* it was that Christ's undergoing crucifixion could in fact be the climax of a campaign issuing in glorious victory. When the explanations failed, as they did with 'Alī al-Ṭabarī, the narrative appeared to end with Satan putting the Son of God to the most shameful of deaths -- a scandalous end to the story, one that offers praise to Satan, derision to God, and "shame and disparagement to the folk of the heavens and the earth."<sup>(63)</sup>

### 3. The outcome: is redemption verifiable?

When Christian attempts to narrate Christ's crucifixion as the climactic moment in the story of his victory-through-deception failed to be convincing, it was easy for Muslim critics to make the judgement that the story was *in fact* one of failure. But their judgement was not solely an assessment of a narrative presenting a number of obscurities. Rather, Christians had claimed that the narrative was *true* and had salvation-historical consequences. The author of "On the Triune God" had claimed that "Christ . . . crucified sin and destroyed the Devil by his crucifixion" and "killed death . . . by his death."<sup>(64)</sup> Not only did such claims strike a polemicist like 'Alī al-Ṭabarī as inherently incoherent -- "How does the one whom death killed overcome death?"<sup>(65)</sup> -- but they also seemed to be open to empirical falsification. 'Ammār al-Baṣrī recorded the sort of questions that Muslim questioners could and did ask:<sup>(66)</sup>

وكيف دحض عنهم الخطايا، وقد نرى الناس كلهم يخطئون ويذنبون؟  
 (ثمّ قد تزعمون أنّه أوعدهم الخطاة بعذاب لا يزول!)  
 وكيف أبطل عنهم الموت، ولم يكن الموت منذ كانت الدنيا أكثر  
 منه منذ ظهر المسيح إلى اليوم، ولا كانت أعمار الناس منذ قط أقصر منذ  
 ذلك حتى الآن؟

#### TRANSLATION:

How did [Christ] nullify sins for them, when we see all people sinning and transgressing? (And then they claim that he threatened sinners with everlasting torment!)

63. لئن كان صعود إنسان واحد إلى السماء شرفاً بهذا لأهل الأرض أجمعين، [فكان] انحطاط خالق الدنيا ونزوله لمحاربة الشيطان وإمكانه إيّاه من نفسه حتّى قُتل عاراً ومنقصاً لأهل السموات والأرض ("If indeed through one man's ascension into heaven was honor for all the folk of the earth, then the descent of the Creator to do battle with Satan, and his giving him power over himself to the extent that he was killed, was shame and disparagement to the folk of the heavens and the earth!"), KHALIFÉ/KUTSCH, "Radd" (1959), 132/9-12.

64. See above, p. 156 (#4).

65. كيف يغلب الموت من قتله الموت؟ MURQUS ĠIRĠIS, *Ṣaḥā'ih* (1927-28), 103/10-11.

66. In the *Kitāb al-masā'il wa-l-aḡwibah* IV,47, HAYEK, *Apologie* (1977), 255\*/13-16.

And how did he abolish death for them, when not since the world began has death been more widespread than [it has been] since the appearance of Christ to the present day, and never have people's lifespans been shorter than [they have been] since that time until now?

Empirically speaking, claimed the Muslims, Christ's career was a failure. He had come to do away with sin and death, but had failed to do so.<sup>(67)</sup> He had come for the salvation of all people, but only a minority believed.<sup>(68)</sup> And even among those who did believe, death was just as apparent as among those who did not.<sup>(69)</sup>

Therefore, the Muslim polemicists decide, the Christian narrative of redemption as Christ's cunning victory over Satan is incoherent and results in claims that are simply false, and those who believe it are deserving only of scorn. "Christ did not cut a strand of the ropes of Satan,"<sup>(70)</sup> wrote 'Alī al-Ṭabarī, but "bequeathed [his followers] the mockery of all people."<sup>(71)</sup>

#### 4. Consequences

The very sharp Islamic critique of the Christian story of Christ's victory-through-deception over Satan the world-enslaver was undoubtedly heard by Christian apologists. Some responded by exerting their imaginations in an attempt to explain more plausibly how Christ's ignominious death by crucifixion was *in fact* the climax of his gloriously successful deception of Satan.<sup>(72)</sup> Others, however, appear to have responded to the Islamic critique by developing explanations of the crucifixion and its benefits quite different from what we saw in "On the Triune God." They

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67. 'Alī al-Ṭabarī in *al-Radd 'alā l-Naṣārā*: فما باله لم يبطل بمجيئه الخطيئة والموت كما زعمتم؟ ("Why did he *not* do away with sin and death through his coming, as you claim?"), MURQUS ĠIRĠIS, *Ṣaḥā'ih* (1927–28), 92/3.

68. So in the "Letter of 'Umar," SOURDEL, "Pamphlet" (1966), 28/23–29/2.

69. So Abū Rā'iṭah's "questioner" in "On the Incarnation," GRAF, *Abū Rā'iṭa* (1951), 37 (#13), or SAMIR, "Création" (1989), 206–7 (#199–200).

70. ولا قطع شعرة من حبال الشيطان, MURQUS ĠIRĠIS, *Ṣaḥā'ih* (1927–28), 87/4.

71. بل أورثهم الاستهزاء من سائر الناس, *ibid.*, lines 7–8.

72. As in the second or ninth chapters of the *Kitāb al-īdāh* of the tenth-century Copt Sāwīrus b. al-Muqaffa' (GCAL II, 309–11 (#4)). According to Sāwīrus (in Chapter Nine, which I read in Vatican ar. 1258 (16th c.), 174<sup>r</sup>–190<sup>v</sup>), from the time of his human birth Christ was determined to deceive Satan, and throughout his ministry acted in such a way as to keep Satan in doubt about his true identity. The endgame was played out at Golgotha; it was not until after Christ's word "I thirst" and the cry of dereliction that Satan was convinced that Christ was a mere man, and approached in order to reveal himself to him, dry up his blood through fear, and carry his soul off to Hell. But Christ died of his own free will (and thus his blood was not dried up, but could later flow from the spear wound in his side), bound Satan, and took possession of the souls in Hell as an indemnity for his death (ff. 183<sup>v</sup>–186<sup>v</sup>).

chose not to narrate the story of redemption as that of Satan's rise and fall, so as not to be exposed to the charge that their understanding of redemption made too much of Satan, to the dishonor of God and of His faithful human servants.

This "demythologizing" trend is well illustrated from the apologetic work of Abū Rā'īṭah. In his "On the Incarnation" he freely uses the *vocabulary* of the story of our first parents' fall under the tyranny of Satan:<sup>(73)</sup> the point of the Incarnation is the rescue (*inqāḍ*) of Adam and his descendants, their salvation (*taḥlīṣ*) from error (*ḍalālah*) which had overcome them (*tasallaṭat 'alayhim*), their being raised up (*inhāḍ*) from their overthrown state (*ṣara'ah*), and their return (*radd*) to their original state (*martabatihim al-ūlā*). A comparison with passages reproduced above from *Fī taḥlīṣ Allāh al-wāḥid, al-Burhān*, and *al-Ġāmi' wuḡūh al-īmān* is revealing. In those texts, the rescue (*inqāḍ*) is from *the hands of the Devil*;<sup>(74)</sup> it is the error or misguidance (*ḍalālah*) of the Devil from which humanity must be saved;<sup>(75)</sup> it is *Satan* who had thrown down (*ṣara'a*) Adam by a trick<sup>(76)</sup> and thereby gained ascendancy and mastery over all of humanity.<sup>(77)</sup> In "On the Incarnation," Abū Rā'īṭah uses precisely the same vocabulary but *without* mentioning the Devil. He speaks instead of the "enfeeblement" of Adam and his descendants "through their long familiarity with [error]."<sup>(78)</sup>

In addition to this "demythologizing" trend, there was a search for new "points of contact" between Christians and Muslims on which to build an apologetic presentation of redemption, with the crucifixion in its center. In "On the Triune God," the "points of contact" were, as we saw, shared fragments of *narrative* -- the creation of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from the Garden; the mission and deliverance of Noah, Lot, and Moses; the annunciation -- worked into a story of the acts of a God commonly celebrated as *ḥayr al-mākirīn*, "the best of devisers." The *apologetic* aspect of this presentation of redemption consisted in the attempt to induct Muslims, through these common elements, into the Christian story into which these elements had been incorporated. However, this sort of "narrative apologetic" did not fare very well, to judge from the criticisms of "Umar," 'Alī al-Ṭabarī, and others. The Christian narrative imagination failed to make contact with an Islamic spirit that searched the Qur'ān for eternal, unchanging verities. And therefore, Christian apologists came to look more for shared *principles* or *doctrines* than for shared

73. For what follows see GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭa* (1951), 36/3–5, or SAMIR, "Création" (1989), 200–1 (#175–77).

74. See above, pp. 155–56 (#3).

75. Ibid. (#1). Abū Rā'īṭah himself slips into this kind of language in his "Apology for the Christian Religion": God became incarnate in order to save his servants من ضلالة الغاشم الشيطان, "from the misguidance of the tyrant Satan"; GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭa* (1951), 150/3.

76. See above, pp. 159–60, 161 (#2).

77. See above, p. 161 (#2).

78. تضعفهم أنفسهم بطول ألفتهم بها [ضلالة], GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭa* (1959), 36/4 or SAMIR, "Création" (1989), 200–1 (#176).

narrative fragments to serve as the "points of contact" upon which to construct their explanations of Christ's redemptive death.

But this is to anticipate upcoming discussion.

## II. Redemption as Certainty in the General Resurrection

### A. The "Divine Demonstration" Apology: Introduction

#### 1. Christ "showed forth the resurrection"

At one point in his conversation with the caliph al-Mahdī, the Nestorian catholicos Timothy stressed the freedom with which Jesus Christ went to his crucifixion. According to the catholicos, Christ was perfectly capable of saving himself from the Jews. After all, the gospels report that he had escaped from their hands before (e.g. Luke 4:28-30), while the wonders that attended his crucifixion – to say nothing of his eventual resurrection – bore witness to his power. *But:*<sup>(79)</sup>

If he had delivered himself from the Jews, then he would not have been crucified. If he had not been crucified, neither would he have died. If he had not died, neither would he have risen to everlasting life. And if he had not risen to everlasting life, then people would have remained without a sign of, or arguments for, [the reality of] everlasting life.

Today, because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, the eyes of all people are looking towards everlasting life. So that this expectation of everlasting life and of the world to come be firmly impressed upon the people, therefore, it was fitting that Jesus Christ rise from the dead; and so that he rise from the dead, it was fitting and right that he first die; and so that he die it was right first that his death -- as also his resurrection -- be witnessed by all. [Therefore] it was fitting that he die the death of the cross.

Timothy tells a story quite different from that told by his contemporary, the author of "On the Triune God." Instead of narrating redemption as Christ's cunning defeat of Satan, he narrates Christ's crucifixion, death, and resurrection as a *divine demonstration of the reality of the general resurrection and of the life of the world to come*, a demonstration that affords hope and confidence to his faithful people.

This motif is, of course, not new with the Christian controversy with Islam. It appears throughout the history of the Church, usually alongside other motifs. Thus in the oldest eucharistic anaphora for which we have a text, that of the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus (dating to ca. 215 A.D. and preserving older material), God is

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79. Syriac text in MINGANA, "Apology" (1928), 118/2/11–119/1/5. Cf. the Arabic recension edited by CASPAR, "Versions" (1977), 145 (#36–37).

praised for sending Jesus to "destroy death, and break the chains of the devil, and beat down hell underfoot, and lead the righteous to light, and fix a limit, *and manifest the resurrection*."<sup>(80)</sup> We have already encountered similar language in "On the Triune God": "He crucified sin by his crucifixion, killed death (which Adam inherited through trespass) by his death, *and showed forth the resurrection* (*wa-aḡhara l-qiyāmah*)."<sup>(81)</sup> But if the manifestation of the resurrection in these texts is but one (unemphasized) aspect of the salvation worked in and by Christ, many Arabic Christian apologists -- e.g. Timothy, Abū Rā'īṭah, 'Ammār al-Baṣrī, Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī, the author of *al-Ġāmi'* -- made it the centerpiece of their apologetic soteriology. Christ died and rose again in order to give us the certainty (*yaqīn* -- words from the root *yqn* will appear frequently in this section) of the reality of the *general* resurrection.

As an example, we may cite a passage from 'Ammār's *Kitāb al-masā'il wa-l-aḡwibah* in which he makes use of a vivid little allegory to make his point:<sup>(82)</sup>

- 1 فكما الطبيب الماهر الرفيق،  
إذا أراد أن يقتدي الناس بعلمه،  
ويركنوا إلى طلبه،  
ويتنافسوا في دوائه،  
أظهر برهان ما ادّعى من علمه ومهارته في نفسه؛
- 2 ولا يجد برهاناً أوكد عندهم،  
ولا أوثق في صدورهم،  
من أن يدعوا بسمّ قاتل،  
فيشرّبه أمامهم،
- 3 حتّى،  
إذا أنجع السّمّ في بدنه،  
تناول شيئاً من دوائه؛  
فأتبع السّمّ به،  
فعاش؛  
ولم يضرّه السّمّ مع دوائه شيئاً.
- 4 فحينئذ يعرف الناس الناظرون فضل علمه،  
ويتنافسون في الاستكثار من دوائه.

80. See the ed. and FT of BOTTE, *Tradition* (1968), 50–51.

81. See above, p. 156 (#4).

82. *Kitāb al-masā'il wa-l-aḡwibah* IV,32, HAYEK, *Apologie* (1977), 229\*–30\*.

- 5 كذلك المسيح، محيي العالمين بقوّته؛  
 إذ كان سبب ظهوره في العالم  
 ليستنقذ الناس من ضلالتهم،  
 ويجذبهم من طاعة إبليس إلى طاعة ربّهم،  
 وليشبع عقولهم يقيناً  
 بما بشرهم به من قيامة أجسادهم ومصيرها إلى النعيم،  
 الذي أعدّه لأوليّ الصلاح منهم؛
- 6 سرّه لرأفته بهم، وحبّه لهم،  
 أن يحمّل نفسه الأوجاع والآلام في صلاحهم،  
 فيموت أمامهم،  
 ويقوم تجاههم،
- 7 لتطمئنّ إلى ما بشرهم من ذلك نفوسهم،  
 ويؤمنوا أنّه قادر أن يفي لهم بما وعدهم به من إقامة ميتتهم،  
 وإثابتهم<sup>(1)</sup> بالنعيم السمائي،  
 على إيمانهم وصلاح أعمالهم؛
- 8 فيؤثرون طاعته ودعوته على دنياهم،  
 فيجزل على ما يبذلون له من طاعتهم ثوابهم جزاءهم.

(1) Ed. وابانتهم.

#### TRANSLATION:

- 1 It is as [in the case of] a kind, skillful physician:  
 when he wanted people to be guided by his knowledge,  
 rely on seeking him out,  
 and ardently desire his medicine,  
 he made a public demonstration *in his own self*  
 of the knowledge and skill he claimed for himself.
- 2 And not finding any demonstration inspiring greater certainty for them,  
 or greater confidence in their breasts,  
 than that he have mortal poison brought to him  
 and drink it before them,  
 [he did so];
- 3 so that,  
 when the poison took effect in his body,  
 he took some of his medicine;  
 he subdued the the poison by means of it,  
 and he lived;  
 the poison — with the medicine — did not harm him at all.
- 4 At that time the people watching recognize the abundance of his knowledge,  
 and ardently desire to obtain great quantities of his medicine!

- 5 Just so [is the case of] Christ, who gives life to the worlds by his power.  
 Since the purpose of his appearance in the world  
 was to seek the rescue of the people from their error,  
 to draw them away from the obedience of the Devil  
 to the obedience of their Lord,  
 and to satisfy their minds with certainty (*yaqīn*)  
 in the good news he announced to them  
 concerning the resurrection of their bodies  
 and their destiny in blessedness,  
 which he prepared for those of them who were righteous,
- 6 it pleased him, because of his compassion and love for them,  
 to take upon himself pains and suffering for their benefit,  
 to die before them,  
 and to rise in front of them,
- 7 so that their souls would have confidence  
 in the good news of that [resurrection] which he announced to them,  
 and so that they would be certain (*yūqīnū*)  
 that he is able to fulfill for them what he had promised  
 concerning the resurrection of their dead,  
 and their recompense in heavenly blessedness,  
 on the basis of their faith and the righteousness of their works.
- 8 Thus they would prefer his obedience and his call  
 over [the attractions and demands of] their world,  
 and their recompense and reward would abound  
 according to their exertions for his sake in their obedience [to him].

The popularity of this image of the physician trying out his own antidote on himself is attested by its presence in, for example, the *beta*-recension of the dialogue of Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī<sup>(83)</sup> and some of the recensions of Abū Qurrah's debate at the court of al-Ma'mūn.<sup>(84)</sup>

## 2. The apologetic "point of contact"

The popularity of the "demonstration" redescription of the story of Christ in the writings of the earliest Arabic Christian apologists may be attributed to the desire of these writers to build an apologetic soteriology upon an obvious piece of common ground between Christians and Muslims: the belief in the general resurrection of the dead, and in eternal life for God's elect. In the light of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Christian apologists could claim to have superior grounds for holding to this belief. 'Alī al-Ṭabarī gives a somewhat distorted reflection of this Christian claim when, in his *al-Dīn wa-l-dawlah*, he devotes a section to a "refutation of the one who

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83. E.g., at Paris ar. 215, ff. 60<sup>v</sup>–61<sup>r</sup>; Vatican ar. 136, ff. 107<sup>v</sup>–108<sup>r</sup>; Vatican syr. 608, ff. 81<sup>v</sup>–82<sup>r</sup>; VOLLERS, "Religionsgespräch" (1908), 57–58.

84. E.g. Mingana syr. 190, f. 14<sup>r</sup> and 444, ff. 151<sup>r</sup>–152<sup>v</sup>; Paris ar. 70, ff. 182<sup>v</sup>–183<sup>v</sup> and 258, f. 241<sup>v</sup>; Paris ar. 198, ff. 47<sup>r</sup>–48<sup>r</sup> and 215, ff. 242<sup>r</sup>.

claims that no one but Christ mentioned the resurrection."<sup>(85)</sup> The Christian claim, however, was not that no one but Christ had mentioned the resurrection, but that only the death and resurrection of Christ provided *sure* grounds for believing in it.

This Christian claim is often left unstated, but it is expressed very bluntly in the Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī debate.<sup>(86)</sup> Accused by the Muslim al-Baṣrī of disbelieving in the resurrection (*al-qiyāmah wa-l-ba'ṭ*), Ibrāhīm responds:<sup>(87)</sup>

«نحن من أمر القيامة والبعث على الحق واليقين، لأننا رأينا القيامة والبعث  
عياناً! وأما أنتم واليهود، من أمر القيامة والبعث، على الرجاء!»

#### TRANSLATION:

"We [Christians], with respect to the resurrection, are [living] in truth and certainty (*'alā l-ḥaqq wa-l-yaqīn*), because we have seen the resurrection with our own eyes! But you [Muslims] and the Jews, with respect to the resurrection, are [living solely] in hope (*'alā l-raġā'*)!"

Ibrāhīm goes on to explain that this is because both Moses and Muḥammad, despite their proclamation of the general resurrection, died and did not rise. Christ, on the other hand, not only proclaimed the general resurrection as did Moses and Muḥammad, and died and was buried, but then rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, from whence he will come again. With regard to the general resurrection, then, "we [Christians] then have been granted by our master to live in the realization of truth (*'alā l-taḥqīq*), but you have [only] been granted by your master to live in hope (*'alā l-raġā'*)."<sup>(88)</sup>

### 3. Responses to questions

#### (a) *How is the demonstration salvific?*

The "divine demonstration" redescription of the story of Christ can be seen as belonging to an ancient stream of Christian thought that saw salvation primarily as *enlightenment*. Life lived in "expectation of everlasting life and of the world to come," to use Timothy's phrase, is qualitatively different from that which has no such firm expectation. As 'Ammār put it, those who live in sure confidence of the resurrection of the body and the reward of heavenly beatitude on the basis of faith

85. 'ĀDIL NUWAYHID, *Fī al-radd 'alā min za'ma anna l-qiyāma lam yadkura ḥadīṡ al-masīḥ (عليه السلام!)*, *Dīn* (1979), 203–4.

86. See MARCUZZO, *Dialogue* (1986), 512–15 (#535–45).

87. *Ibid.*, 512–13 (#536–38).

88. *Ibid.*, 514–15 (#545). نحن من أمر القيامة والبعث؛ وأنتم من صاحبكم على الرجاء

and righteous works "would prefer his obedience and his call over [the attractions and demands of] their world."

It was on the basis of the "divine demonstration" redescription of the story of Christ that Abū Rā'īṭah was able to respond to a Muslim questioner who found Christian claims about salvation from death to have no empirical foundation.<sup>(89)</sup> According to Abū Rā'īṭah, there are two sorts of death: death in its true or literal meaning (*bi-ḥaqq*), which is "the death of sin and error"; and death in its figurative meaning (*bi-sti'ārah min al-qawl*), which is the separation of the soul from the body.<sup>(90)</sup> As for "figurative" death, the separation of the soul from the body, it will be overcome in the general resurrection, the truth of which Christ has established through his own bodily resurrection. For the present, "the one who is certain (*mutayaqqin*) of the return of his life is not dead, even though he dies."<sup>(91)</sup>

Furthermore, not only is the death of final separation of soul from body overcome in the divine demonstration of the resurrection, but also "the death of sin and error":<sup>(92)</sup>

فعلة الموت الحقيقي الجهل بالقيامة،  
وعلة الحياة الحقيقية التيقن بها.  
لأن المتيقن بها  
خائف أوزاره، وراج حسناته؛  
والشاك فيها  
زاهد في الحسنات، راحب للخطيات.

#### TRANSLATION:

The cause of true death is ignorance of the resurrection,  
and the cause of true life is certainty (*al-tayaqqun*) of it.  
That is because the one who is certain (*al-mutayaqqin*) of it  
fears his faults and hopes in his good deeds;  
while the one who doubts it  
refrains from good deeds and pursues sins.

In Abū Rā'īṭah's analysis, soteriological summaries such as we encountered in "On the Triune God" -- "he crucified sin by his crucifixion, killed death . . . by his death, and showed forth the resurrection"<sup>(93)</sup> -- receive a very specific interpretation. It was precisely by showing forth his resurrection from death that Christ overcame death,

89. See above, p. 174, note 69. For what follows (from Abū Rā'īṭah's "On the Incarnation"), see GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭah* (1951), 37 (#13), or better, SAMIR, "Création" (1989), 206–9 (#199–215).

90. For another Jacobite analysis of the kinds of death, see below, pp. 263–65.

91. فليس المتيقن بإعادة حياته، وإن مات، بميت؛ GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭah* (1951), 37/15; SAMIR, "Création" (1989), 208–9 (#210).

92. GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭah* (1951), 37/16–18; SAMIR, "Création" (1989), 208–9 (#212–14).

93. See above, p. 156 (#4).

not only the separation of soul and body, but also "the death of sin."

(b) *Why was the preaching of the resurrection insufficient?*

It is not difficult to imagine a Muslim controversialist, confronted with the Christian "divine demonstration" apology, saying in response: "We believe in the resurrection of the dead quite as firmly as you do! So in what lies the superiority that you claim for Christ's communication concerning the resurrection?" The closest thing to such a retort preserved in our literature is a question in 'Ammār al-Baṣrī's *Kitāb al-masā'il wa-l-aḡwibah*.<sup>(94)</sup> There the questioner asserts that *all* the prophets called people to the obedience of their Lord and proclaimed to them the resurrection of the dead, but that all but Christ were content to do this by means of their *preaching*, without delivering themselves into the hands of their enemies. "If their preaching was one, their word was one, and their reception by the people was nearly the same in every case, then Christ's giving himself over to death -- which he alone of them did -- was without cause!"<sup>(95)</sup>

'Ammār's response is interesting, because instead of developing the "in truth and certainty"/"in [mere] hope" distinction that lies behind the "divine demonstration" apology and which the Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī debate made explicit, he moves to a different plane of discussion. 'Ammār argues that the prophets did *not* all preach the same message. Moses, for preeminent example, preached a *this-worldly* message with *this-worldly* promises. Christ, on the other hand, called his followers to self-denial in this world (Matthew 16:25, 19:29), in which he could only promise them *suffering* (Matthew 24:9, John 16:2), but taught them to look to the world to come for their recompense (Matthew 19:27-28). Christ's suffering and death is of a piece with his distinctive message.

In effect, 'Ammār argues that there is more to the "divine demonstration" than the establishment of the simple fact of the resurrection of the dead. It is rather the demonstration of the truth of Christ's preaching and life as a whole. And therefore the bare bones of the "divine demonstration" apology as presented in the Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī debate can and must be, in 'Ammār's apology, fleshed out with a considerable amount of material from the gospels.

(c) *Why were Christ's life-giving miracles insufficient?*

The question about *preaching* and the resurrection in 'Ammār's *Kitāb al-masā'il wa-l-aḡwibah* leads directly on to a question about *miracles* and the

94. IV,33, HAYEK, *Apologie* (1977), 230\*-33\*.

95. وإن كانت الدعوة واحدة والكلمة واحدة وقبول الناس منهم جميعاً قريباً من السواء، فقد كان بذل المسيح  
نفسه من دونهم بغير سبب! *ibid.*, 230\*/13-15.

resurrection.<sup>(96)</sup> Christ had raised the dead! Was that not a sufficient demonstration of the reality of the resurrection? Why did Christ have to die *himself*?

‘Ammār’s response is that the least of Christ’s signs should indeed have been sufficient, but that people in fact refused to believe without a visible demonstration of all that Christ had preached concerning the "spiritual resurrection and the ascension to the heavenly kingdom."<sup>(97)</sup> And since there was no one worthier than Christ to play this role of the "first-fruits" of the resurrection,<sup>(98)</sup>

... لم يكن له من حلّ  
من أن يتجشّم كراهة الموت دون ذلك قدّامهم،  
ثم يُبعث حيّاً روحانيّاً أمامهم،  
ويرتفع على هيئة انبعاثه إلى السماء تجاههم؛  
ليحقّق في صدورهم عدته لهم  
في صعودهم روحانيّين على هيئة قيامتهم.

#### TRANSLATION:

... there was no solution for him  
except to take upon himself the repugnance of death in front of them,  
then to be raised to spiritual life before them,  
and in his resurrection body (*hay'at inbi'āṭihī*)  
to be taken up into heaven opposite them;  
in order to establish in their breasts the truth of his promise to them  
concerning their ascension as spiritual beings  
in their resurrection bodies (*hay'at qiyāmatihim*).

## B. The "Divine Demonstration" Apology: Ramifications

### 1. Christ’s necessarily public, verifiable death

#### (a) *In the Kitāb al-masā'il wa-l-aḡwibah of 'Ammār al-Baṣrī*

The *public* character of the saving events has already been stressed in a number places, especially in the passage from ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī just cited: "there was no solution for [Christ] except to take upon himself the repugnance of death *in front of them*, then to be raised to spiritual life *before them*, and in his resurrection body to be taken up into heaven *opposite them*." In the *Kitāb al-masā'il wa-l-aḡwibah*, ‘Ammār goes on to explore the issues raised by the *manner* of Christ’s death in a

96. IV,34, *ibid.*, 233\*.

97. القيامة الروحاني والارتفاع إلى الملك السماوي *ibid.*, 233\*/10–11.

98. *Ibid.*, lines 14–16.

series of closely linked questions and answers.<sup>(99)</sup>

Why did Christ not simply die an *ordinary* death, and then rise again?<sup>(100)</sup> Because, according to 'Ammār, people might then suspect that he had not died at all, but was perpetrating a fraud (*hidā*)! Was it really necessary for a convincing demonstration that Christ die *by crucifixion*, reserved for the worst of criminals?<sup>(101)</sup> Yes, replied 'Ammār, since precisely this form of death would be observed by the greatest number of people and reported most widely:<sup>(102)</sup>

وَأَلَّا تَرَى أَنَّهُ لَا شَيْءَ مِنَ الْأَشْيَاءِ الَّتِي تَمُوتُ النَّاسُ  
أَفْشَى فِيهِمْ ذِكْرًا،  
وَلَا أَشْهَرُ لَذِكْرِهِمْ خَبْرًا،  
وَلَا الْعَوَامُّ إِلَى النَّظَرِ إِلَيْهِ أَشَدَّ احْتِشَادًا،  
مِنْ مَيِّتَةِ الصَّلْبِ؟

#### TRANSLATION:

Don't you see that there is no form of execution  
more widely commented upon among [the people],  
more openly reported in their conversation,  
or more powerful in gathering crowds of spectators from the common people,  
than the death of crucifixion?

But, continues 'Ammār's interlocutor, why did Christ not descend from the cross *immediately* after his death, so as to silence those who had taunted him (Matthew 27:40, 42) and bring his demonstration to completion? Why did Christ have to be laid in the tomb and buried in the dust?<sup>(103)</sup> 'Ammār's response is, in the first place, that God does not respond to mockery. In the second place, if Christ had come down from the cross immediately there would again have been the possibility of doubt as to whether he had *truly* died. "Many of the people of obstinacy, discord, and injustice would have said: 'How may we know that he died a real death? Perhaps he let his head sag [as if in death] out of dissembling and guile, to make the onlookers believe that he had really and truly died!'"<sup>(104)</sup> It was therefore fitting, according to 'Ammār, that Christ be buried in a guarded tomb, so as "to abolish from the people's hearts any suspicion or hypocritical doubt with respect to the veracity of his death."<sup>(105)</sup> In the third place, rising *from the dust of the tomb* is an integral part

99. IV,35-37, HAYEK, *Apologie* (1977), 234\*-37\*.

100. *Mas'alah* 35, *ibid.*, 234\*.

101. *Mas'alah* 36, *ibid.*, 235\*.

102. *Ibid.*, lines 9-10.

103. *Mas'alah* 37, *ibid.*, 235\*-37\*.

104. لَقَالَ كَثِيرٌ مِنْ أَهْلِ التَّعَنُّتِ وَالشُّغْبِ وَالْبَغْيِ: «وَكَيْفَ لَنَا أَنْ نَعْلَمَ أَنَّهُ مَاتَ مَوْتًا صَحِيحًا؟ وَلَعَلَّهُ أَرْخَى رَأْسَهُ رِيَاءً وَمَكْرًا لِيُرِيَ النَّاطِرِينَ أَنَّهُ قَدْ مَاتَ يَقِينًا يَقِينًا!» *ibid.*, 236\*/18-20.

105. لإِبْطَالِ التَّهْمَةِ وَالتَّرَاوِي فِي صَحَّةِ مَوْتِهِ عَنْ قُلُوبِ النَّاسِ *ibid.*, 237\*/1-2.

of the divine demonstration, granting the believers confidence that, in the general resurrection, also those who lie in the dust will be raised to life.

(b) *In al-Ġāmi' wuḡūh al-īmān*

Similar arguments are advanced by the author of *al-Ġāmi' wuḡūh al-īmān*, for example in Chapter 17, Question 25 ("On the death of Christ our Lord by means of public crucifixion"), which gives a fair summary of the "divine demonstration" apology:<sup>(106)</sup>

- 1 إنَّ المسيح ربَّنَا كان عتيدياً<sup>(1)</sup> أن ينبعث بعد موته، فتكون بعثته سبباً لكي ييقن الناس ببعثة الأموات. 2 ولأنَّ ما دون الصلب من وجوه الموت قد تُخفى<sup>(2)</sup> عن كثير من الناس، لذلك اختار المسيح ربَّنَا الصلب المشتهر، وليعانيه<sup>(3)</sup> الناس وليظهر صلبه وموته.
- 3 وكان صلبه يوم الجمعة بتوفيق منه إرادة أن يُنزل من ليلته.
- 4 وذلك أن المصلوب في بني إسرائيل لم يكن يُترك ليلة السبت فوق الخشبة. 5 ولو أنَّ المسيح ربَّنَا صُلب من بعد السبت، إذن لبقِيَ على الخشبة إلى السبت الآخر، فيتمسَّخ، ولم يُدفن. 6 ولكنه وفق صلبه يوم الجمعة.
- 7 ثمَّ وفق له أيضاً رجلاً<sup>(4)</sup> من الناس، فاستوهبه من الوالي، فأدرجه في ثياب ووضعه في قبر جديد، لم يكن وُضع فيه أحد من الناس. 8 وكان ذلك بتوفيق من المسيح ربَّنَا لئلا يكون لليهود حجة على جحدهم بقيامته.
- 9 وذلك أنَّ القبور في أرض المغرب بيوت ومغائر، [f. 110<sup>r</sup>] يُلقى<sup>(5)</sup> في البيت الواحد والمغارة الواحدة بشر كثيرين.<sup>(2)</sup> 10 فلو أنَّ المسيح ربَّنَا وُضع في بعض تلك البيوت التي فيها الأموات، إذن لقال المكذَّب<sup>(3)</sup> بقيامته، «هو أحد هذه الأموات»، ولم تكن عليه حجة.
- 11 فموت المسيح ربَّنَا بالصلب<sup>(4)</sup> المشتهر بتوفيق منه، ليظهر للناس؛ حتَّى، إذا انبعث فعانيه مَنْ قد شهد صلبه وموته ومقبره، اقتاس ببعثته من بعد موته، فاستدلَّ على بعثة الأموات عامةً.

الصلب MS (4). المكذِّبين MS (3). كثير MS (2). وليعاني MS (1).

TRANSLATION:

1 Christ our Lord was going to rise after his death, so that his resurrection would be a means by which he gives people certainty (*yuyaqqin al-nās*) of the resurrection of the dead. 2 Because the kinds of death less [notorious] than crucifixion may be hidden from many people, Christ our Lord therefore chose the death of public crucifixion, so that people would see it with their own eyes, and so that he might [thus] make manifest his crucifixion and death.

3 His crucifixion was on Friday by his arrangement (*bi-tawfīq minhu*), as he desired to be taken down that night. 4 That is because among the children of Israel the crucified person was not left on the cross on the night of the Sabbath. 5 If Christ our Lord had been crucified *after* the Sabbath, he would then have remained on the cross until the next Sabbath, and would have decomposed and not been buried. 6 But he arranged for his crucifixion on Friday.

7 Furthermore, he also arranged, in accordance with his purposes, that there be a man of the people who asked the governor that he be given him [i.e., Christ's body], and wrapped him in a garment, and laid him in a new tomb in which no one had been laid. 8 That was by the arrangement of Christ our Lord, so that the Jews would have no evidence for their denial of his resurrection. 9 That is because the tombs in the land of the West are buildings and caves, many people being laid in one building or one cave. 10 If Christ our Lord had been laid in one of those buildings containing the dead, one who denied his resurrection would have said, "He is one of these dead," and there would have been no evidence against him.

11 Therefore the death of Christ our Lord was by public crucifixion by his arrangement, in order that it be manifest to the people. [This was] so that when he rose from the dead and one who had witnessed his crucifixion, death, and burial saw him, [that one] would infer [the fact of] his resurrection after his death, and thence induce [the reality of] the resurrection of the dead in general.

A parallel passage in Chapter 8<sup>(107)</sup> had added two other details. First, "Christ our Lord gave himself over to public execution on the best known of days, when there was the greatest congregation of people."<sup>(108)</sup> And second, it was Christ who was behind the Jews' request that a guard be put on the tomb (Matthew 27:62-66) "so that they would have nothing to adduce as evidence" [that Christ's disciples had stolen the body].<sup>(109)</sup>

There is another question addressed by the author of *al-Ġāmi' wuḡūh al-īmān* concerning the clarity and unambiguity of the "divine demonstration" of the reality of the general resurrection: is it possible to rule out an elaborate *demonic* fraud? The author of *al-Ġāmi'* believes it is. For example, in response to a typically Muslim question about Christ's human vicissitudes,<sup>(110)</sup> he responds that God assumed a human "veil" (*ḥiḡāb Allāh allaḡī iḡṭāḡaba*)<sup>(111)</sup> for three reasons, the third (and most fully developed) of which is as follows:<sup>(112)</sup>

107. BL or. 4950, f. 39<sup>r</sup>v.

108. ولكن المسيح ربنا بذل نفسه للموت المشتهر في أشهر الأيام وأجمعه أهلاً; *ibid.*, f. 39<sup>r</sup>/1-2.

109. لأن لا [كذا] يكون لهم حجة يعتلون بها; *ibid.*, line 21.

110. Ch. 18, Question #4; BL or. 4950, ff. 118<sup>v</sup>-119<sup>r</sup>.

111. BL or. 4950, f. 118<sup>v</sup>/17. As the author had made explicit in the previous question (Question #3, BL or. 4950, f. 117<sup>v</sup>), the author's use of the "veiling" terminology is dictated at least in part by an attempt to make contact with a Qur'ānic verse, *al-Šūrā* (42):51: وما كان لبشر أن يكلمه الله إلا وحياً أو ("It belongs not to any mortal that God should speak to him, except by revelation, or from behind a veil").

112. BL or. 4950, f. 119<sup>r</sup>/2-11.

- 1 . . . ليمثّل لهم بنفسه ما يستدلّون به على بعثته الأموات،  
ببعثته بشره الذي احتجب به للموت بالصلب المشتهر،  
وقيامته بعد ثلاثة أيام.
- 2 ولأنّ الشيطان ليس في طبيعته ما في طبيعة الانسان  
من الحاجة والحسّ بالمكاره،  
وقد يغرّ الناس بتجليته لهم في صورة الانسان،
- 3 لذلك المسيح ربّنا أكل وشرب وسعى<sup>١١٣</sup> مساعي الإنس،  
وظهر منه الحاجة والحسّ بالمكاره،
- 4 ليتحقّق بذلك بشره،  
ويتحقّق موته وقيامته؛  
فيقتاس به المؤمن ببعثته الأموات عامّة.

## TRANSLATION:

- 1 [God assumed a human veil] in order to enact for them *in himself*  
that from which they could induce his raising the dead,  
by his surrendering the humanity in which he had veiled himself to death  
by public crucifixion,  
and his resurrection after three days.
- 2 Because Satan does not by his nature share in human nature's needs  
or experience of adversity,  
even though he may deceive people by appearing to them in human form,
- 3 therefore Christ our Lord ate, drank, went the ways of human beings,  
and was seen to have [bodily] needs and the experience of adversity,
- 4 so that the reality of his humanity be confirmed,  
and the reality of his death and his resurrection,  
from which the believer infers  
[the future reality of] his raising the dead in general.

For the author of *al-Ġāmi'*, the efficacy of Christ's death and resurrection as a certainty-bestowing "preview" of the general resurrection requires that his be a *real* humanity subject to *all* the conditions of human existence (excepting sin),<sup>(113)</sup> since only in this way can the possibility of a Satanic counterfeit be ruled out. The author of *al-Ġāmi'* explains Christ's post-resurrection appearances to the disciples, and particularly that to Thomas, in this same light. By seeing and touching the risen Christ the disciples verified that he was truly the human being they had known, who had undergone death and resurrection. Thus they had a sure ground for hope in the *general* resurrection.<sup>(114)</sup>

113. See also, for example, Chapter 9, BL or. 4950, f. 40<sup>r v</sup>.

114. Chapter 8, BL 4950, ff. 36<sup>v</sup>–37<sup>v</sup>; or Chapter 17, Questions 29 and 30, f. 112<sup>r v</sup>.

(c) *Comments*

From the above passages it is not difficult to appreciate the attractiveness and apologetic utility of the "divine demonstration" redescription of the story of Jesus Christ. In the first place, as discussed above, its point of departure is a doctrine indisputably common to Christians and Muslims: the general resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

In the second place, this redescription is impressive in its capacity to absorb and make use of a great variety of detail from the biblical narrative and the ecumenical tradition. The death *by crucifixion*, which Muslims considered impossible to believe of an honored apostle of God,<sup>(115)</sup> is explained rather simply as an integral part of God's plan for an unambiguous public demonstration of the reality of the resurrection that lies in the future of every human being. Minor-looking details of the story of the crucifixion, including the time and place of its occurrence, or Christ's burial in a new, unoccupied tomb upon which a guard had been set, fit convincingly into the narrative. The author of *al-Ġāmi'* (whose christology always runs from "above" to "below") can even work from redemption as a "divine demonstration" to an apology for the Incarnation: the demonstration is subject to doubt unless its divine subject takes on a true humanity subject to all the conditions of humanity, including "[bodily] needs and the experience of adversity."

In the third place, in the "demonstration" redescription of the story of Jesus as both 'Ammār and the author of *al-Ġāmi'* develop it, *Christ* is the subject of the action. In response to Muslim charges that Christians portrayed Christ as weak and a failure -- especially in connection with the story of Christ's deceptive surrender to Satan<sup>(116)</sup> -- the "demonstration" narrative provided the Christian apologist with a plausible way of asserting that Christ did *not* die out of weakness, nor did he go to his death as a puppet in someone else's play, but rather *he himself* was the author and director of the drama, managing all the details of stagecraft in order best to reach his audience. This is a subject to which we shall return shortly.

## 2. Probing further

Despite the clarity and apologetic utility of the "divine demonstration" apology as we have described it thus far, drawing heavily on the *Kitāb al-masā'il wa-l-aḡwibah* (IV,32-37) of 'Ammār al-Baṣrī, 'Ammār was not content to drop the matter at this point and move on to other topics. Instead, he devoted several pages of

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115. See above, pp. 145–46.

116. See above, pp. 170–73.

text to two additional questions<sup>(117)</sup> which may summarize issues raised by Muslim *mutakallimūn* confronted with the "demonstration" apology, or which may simply be 'Ammār's own questions as he weighed the apology for overall coherence and persuasive power.

Earlier in his discussion, 'Ammār had made reference to Christ's death "in front of" the people (*quddāmahum*), his resurrection "before them" (*amāmahum*), and his ascension "opposite them" (*tuḡāhahum*).<sup>(118)</sup> He then proceeded to present his arguments for the fittingness of Christ's dying in a public, widely-reported, and crowd-drawing manner.<sup>(119)</sup> 'Ammār's "questioner" goes on to ask, in effect: does this train of argument not imply that Christ's resurrection (and ascension) should have been just as public, widely-reported, and crowd-drawing as his crucifixion? But, then, "what prevented him . . . from rising from the tomb openly by day, and then showing himself alive and in public to *all* those who saw his death on the cross?"<sup>(120)</sup>

In a surprising twist of the argument, 'Ammār responds that this would *not* have been appropriate. Christ's adversaries and killers were not worthy of seeing his glorious resurrection body. If they *had* seen it, they would have identified it as his demon (*ṣayṭānuhu*), by which he had driven out demons (cf. Mark 3:22). Furthermore, it would not have been just for Christ to appear to the people of one city, but not of another. If Christ's resurrection appearances in Jerusalem had been public, fairness would have required him to repeat his crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection for every people in every locality – which is obviously impossible.

Christ's mission was, all the same, universal in scope. This universality was accomplished *through the ministry of the apostles*, who called the communities of the world to Christ's obedience and worship, proclaimed his crucifixion, death, resurrection and ascension, and performed evidentiary miracles, even raising the dead "in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, died, and was raised."<sup>(121)</sup> It was in this way that the peoples, communities, and rulers of the world "became certain (*ayqanat*) that he is the generous and merciful Lord who underwent pain, suffering, crucifixion, and shame in the body of his humanity, seeking their salvation."<sup>(122)</sup>

This leads inexorably to the next question, or, rather, to a return to a previous question. Why could Christ's death not have been as private as his resurrection appearances to the disciples? What need was there for Christ to deliver himself into

117. IV,38–39, HAYEK, *Apologie* (1977), 237\*–42\*.

118. In *Mas'alah* 34. See above, p. 183.

119. In *Mas'alah* 36. See above, p. 184.

120. فما منعه . . . من أن يقوم من قبره علانيةً نهاراً، ثم يظهر لجميع من رأى ميتته على الصليب، حيّاً جهاراً؛ *Mas'alah* 38, HAYEK, *Apologie* (1977), 237\*/8–10. The response summarized below runs from pp. 237\*–39\*.

121. باسم يسوع الناصري الذي صلب ومات وانبعث. *ibid.*, 239\*/11–12.

122. وابتغيت بآته الرب الرحيم الكريم الذي تجشّم الأوجاع والآلام والصلب والهوان في بدن إنسيته تحرياً لخلّصهم *ibid.*, lines 14–16.

the hands of his enemies?<sup>(123)</sup> 'Ammār's response is that Christ could indeed have died privately, had he been confident of his apostles' firmness of conviction (*yaqīn rusulihi*). However, many passages from the gospels attest to the frailty of their faith. If Christ had died in their presence only, they would have come to doubt the reality of his death, especially when adversaries disputed their claims. And thereby they would have been disqualified as Christ's missionaries, able to show forth evidentiary miracles. Therefore it was indeed fitting that Christ die publicly, "so that no one would find the possibility of disputing with them in the matter of his death."<sup>(124)</sup> By making his death an incontestable public fact, Christ did away with any grounds for doubts among his disciples, and "qualified them first to be eyewitnesses of his resurrection appearances, and afterwards to be sent to the masses showing forth [miraculous] signs."<sup>(125)</sup>

What has happened here? In effect, 'Ammār's probing of the "demonstration" apology has led him to recognize the lack of correspondence between the public nature of Christ's death and the private nature of his resurrection appearances to selected followers. In order to address this imbalance he has redefined the apology, adding a level of dialectic to it, and to some degree subordinating it to a different line of apologetic discourse. Christ's crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection are no longer seen in the first instance as a demonstration for the people in general, but as a demonstration *for his disciples*, to qualify them for their ministry of preaching accompanied by evidentiary miracles -- about which 'Ammār and all the early Arabic Christian apologists have much to say when they turn to the question of discerning the true religion.<sup>(126)</sup> The "divine demonstration" of the reality of the general resurrection is indeed intended for all people, but of necessity it reaches them indirectly, in the *kerygma* of those who go out from Jerusalem into all the world, and who are believed because of the signs they perform in the name of "Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified."

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123. *Mas'alah* 39, *ibid.*, 239\*-42\*.

124. لكیما لا یجد أحد فی ذلك مساعاً إلى الطعن علیهم فی موته *ibid.*, 242\*/2-3.

125. أهلهم لمعاينة رؤيته من الانبعاث أولاً، ثم للبعث والرسالة بهم إلى العوام ببدء الآيات أخيراً *ibid.*, lines 5-6.

126. See below, pp. 277-83.

### III. Excursus: The Crucified and His Crucifiers

#### A. Introduction

##### 1. Christ's freedom

We have already noted that one of the strengths of the "divine demonstration" apology was that it provided Christians involved in the Christian-Islamic controversy with a framework within which they could consistently and credibly claim that *Christ was the free subject* of his crucifixion, death, and burial. Many of the texts that we have already considered make this point clearly. To these we may add the following passage from 'Ammār al-Baṣrī, concerning the necessity of Christ's death by crucifixion (rather than a respectable death in bed):<sup>(127)</sup>

- 1 فالذي علم، بسابق علمه،  
أنه لا محيص إلى دفع الشك عن قلوب العوام في موته  
إلا بإظهاره لهم دونه ببدنه،
- 2 تخير الأوقات بلطفه،  
ودبر الأمور بإظهاره لهم دونه بحكمته،  
حتى وجد لما أراد من ذلك فرصة.
- 3 فكان،  
إذ<sup>(1)</sup> احتوشته أعدائه في جمع من جموع الناس ليقتلوه،  
ورأى أنه قد حضرت الفرصة التي يترصدها  
في دفع الشك عن قلوب العوام،
- 4 خلى حينئذ في أيديهم نفسه،  
وأهملهم فيما أرادوا من قتله وصلبه  
بهواه،  
ومشيئته،  
وإرادته،
- 5 إبطال الشك عن قلوب الجميع في موته.

(1) Ed. ١٥١. Hayek has corrected the reading of the MS here, but there is a typographical error: *both* the original and corrected readings are given as ١٥١.

## TRANSLATION:

- 1 He who in his foreknowledge knew  
that to drive doubt about his death from the hearts of the common people  
he had no alternative but to make it manifest to them in his body,
- 2 chose the times, according to his kindness,  
directed matters by manifesting himself to them, according to his wisdom,  
until he found the opportune time that he desired for that.
- 3 So it was,  
that when his enemies gathered in the midst of a crowd of people to kill him,  
and he saw that the opportune time for expelling doubt  
from the hearts of the common people had come,  
(a time for which he was watching,)
- 4 then he gave himself up into their hands,  
and left them to kill and crucify him as they desired,  
according to his wish,  
his will,  
and his desire,
- 5 in order to do away with doubt about his death in the hearts of all [the people].

The subject of practically all the verbs is *Christ*. It was *he* who chose the opportune moment and directed the course of events. It was *he* who gave himself up and left his adversaries to kill and crucify him! And lest any reader miss the point, ‘Ammār adds that all of this was according to *Christ’s* wish (*hawāh*), will (*maṣī’ah*), and desire (*irādah*).

We find the same insistence on *Christ’s* agency in his passion in *al-Ġāmi’ wuḡūh al-īmān*. We recall the passage cited above which emphasized that it was Christ who brought all the details of his crucifixion and burial into conformity with his will so as to make his death plain to the largest possible number of people, and to silence gainsayers. Affirmation of Christ’s freedom in his passion was so important to the author of *al-Ġāmi’* that he included its negation among "the viewpoints that exclude their adherents from Christianity":<sup>(128)</sup>

1 وَمَنْ زَعَمَ أَنَّ شَيْئًا<sup>(1)</sup> مِمَّا أَتَاهُ (الْمَسِيحُ رَبَّنَا)، أَوْ أَتَى إِلَيْهِ، مِنْ  
الْحَاجَةِ وَالْحَسِّ بِالْمَكَارِهِ، أَعْنَى الْمَوْتِ وَالصَّلْبِ فَمَا دُونَهُ، أَتَاهُ أَوْ أَتَى  
إِلَيْهِ كَرْهًا، وَلَمْ يُؤْمِنْ أَنَّ الْمَسِيحَ رَبَّنَا بِشَيْئِهِ [sic] أَدْخَلَ نَفْسَهُ فِي كُلِّ مَا  
أَتَاهُ أَوْ أَتَى إِلَيْهِ، أَفَلَيْسَ مِنَ النَّصَارَى.

128. Chapter 14 ("On the Viewpoints that Exclude their Adherents from Christianity"), #11, BL or. 4950, ff. 81<sup>r</sup>v. Related passages including a number of biblical examples of Christ’s freedom are found in Chapters 8 (ff. 37<sup>v</sup>–39<sup>v</sup>) and 9 (ff. 39<sup>v</sup>–41<sup>v</sup>).

2 و ذلك لما أراد من هدايتنا وإرشادنا، وتحريرنا وفكاكنا، وإلهامنا ما به صلاحنا. 3 ونؤمن بأنه قد كان للمسيح ربنا سبيل أن لا يكون كل ما<sup>(2)</sup> كان منه، وكان من الناس إليه. 4 فمن لم يؤمن بما ذكرنا من ذلك ويضمّر عليه وينطق به، فليس له شركة مع أبناء الله، ولا له [f. 81<sup>v</sup>] تحرّر ولا فكاك ولا خلاص من الموت في الآخرة.

5 والشاهد على ما ذكرنا، بأن ما أتاه المسيح ربنا أو أتى<sup>(3)</sup> إليه بشيئته، أهو المسيح ربنا إذ يقول: «نفسى ليس لأحد أن يأخذها مني. لي سلطان أن أضعها ولي سلطان أن أرتدها». 6 فمن كان في مقدّرتة يقدر على أن يحيي نفسه بعد موته، هو على أن لا يحسّ بالأوجاع وعلى ألغنى<sup>4</sup> عن كلّ حاجة أقدر. 7 وقال الرسول بولس: «أخفى<sup>(4)</sup> نفسه واتخذ شبه العبد، وتواضع إلى الموت، موت الصليب.»<sup>(129)</sup>

The words enclosed in square brackets are added in order to complete the author's thought. (1) MS شي. (2) MS كلما. (3) MS اوتى. (4) Sic. أخلى is closer to the biblical text.

#### TRANSLATION:

1 Whoever claims that any sort of need or experience of adversity came or was brought upon Christ our Lord -- I mean death and crucifixion, as well as lesser experiences of adversity -- [came or was brought upon him] by means of coercion, and who does not believe that Christ our Lord entered himself of his own will into all that came or was brought upon him, [is not a member of the Christian community].

2 That [entrance of Christ into the realm of need and experience of adversity took place] because of his desire to guide and direct us, to free and redeem us, and to inspire in us that in which is our benefit. 3 And we believe that our Lord Christ had the means to avoid that which came upon him and which people brought upon him. 4 Whoever does not believe in what we have mentioned concerning that, and does not take it to heart and speak it plainly, has no fellowship with the children of God, and no liberation or redemption or salvation from death in the world to come.

5 The witness to what we have mentioned concerning the fact that what came or was brought upon Christ our Lord was according to his will is Christ our Lord [himself], when he said: "No one can take my soul from me. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again" [John 10:18]. 6 Furthermore, the one who in his power is capable of reviving himself after his death is even more capable of avoiding the experience of pain, or of being free from every need. 7 The apostle Paul said: "He hid himself and adopted the form of a servant, and humbled himself unto death, the death of the cross" [Philippians 2:7-8].

The emphasis on Christ's freedom in his passion is by no means new with the arabophone Christian apologists, but is frequently stressed in the tradition, particularly in the Gospel according to St. John, and frequently in the Fathers, where one may

129. The author concludes this *bāb* with the citation from St. Athanasius' letter to Bishop Maximus reproduced and translated below, p. 237.

take as an example John Chrysostom's commentaries on the passion narrative:<sup>(130)</sup> Christ who withered the fig tree *could* have destroyed the cross as well,<sup>(131)</sup> but he freely chose to undergo crucifixion, himself ordering the events of his death and burial so as to perfect his obedience to the Father and to fulfill his saving purposes.<sup>(132)</sup>

Stockmeier has pointed out that the emphasis on the freedom with which Christ chose to suffer and die had a specific apologetic purpose in Chrysostom's thought: it clearly differentiates Christ from the dying-and-rising deities (Attis, Adonis, Osiris) of the mystery religions, who do *not* die freely but are rather bound to natural cycles.<sup>(133)</sup> The Christ who chooses freely in history therefore stands opposed to and unabsorbable by the unhistorical (mythical and magical) understandings of reality widespread in the late antique world.<sup>(134)</sup> In the Islamic environment, the confession of Christ's freedom remained apologetically significant, but for a different reason. The issue at stake was no longer the historical character of redemption, but rather the historical success or failure of the one claimed to be redeemer. Christian apologists who argued and wrote in Arabic invoked Christ's freedom in order to assert that -- contrary to appearances! -- the one confessed as Lord and God was *not* weak, under compulsion, and finally defeated in the events of his passion.

## 2. The Guilt of the Jews

If all Christians agreed upon Christ's freedom with respect to his death by crucifixion, another indisputable conviction of the early Church was *the responsibility and guilt of the Jews* for that crucifixion. Christian theological anti-Judaism has its roots in the New Testament; the single verse with the most notorious history of interpretation is Matthew 27:25, when the evangelist Matthew has the crowds cry, "His blood be on us and on our children."<sup>(135)</sup> In the early second-century Apology of Aristides, as Griffith has observed, the statement that Christ was "crucified by the Jews" has almost credal force<sup>(136)</sup> -- despite the fact that it was the Romans who ultimately authorized and carried out the execution. By the fourth century, the epithets *χριστοκτόνος* ("Christ-killer"), *χριστοφόνος* ("Christ-murderer"), and even *θεοκτόνος* ("God-killer") were frequently applied to Jews in Christian writings.<sup>(137)</sup>

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130. See STOCKMEIER, *Chrysostomus* (1966), esp. 42–43, 55–56.

131. Ibid., 55 (citation from *Hom. in Mt* 67,1).

132. Ibid., 42–43.

133. Ibid., 56.

134. Ibid., 43–44.

135. In a curse-formula preserved in a number of Arabic manuscripts of Sinai, Bishop Solomon of Mt. Sinai (d. after 1002 A.D.) threatens book-thieves with: "may his fate be with those who said, 'His blood be on us and on our children'." See, for example, his *waqf* statement in Sinai ar. 75, transcribed in CACHIA, *Demonstration* (1960–61), II, 134/5–6.

136. GRIFFITH, "Jews" (1988), 74, 91 (note 43), referring to HARRIS, *Aristides* (1893), esp. 33 (ET of Armenian fragment).

The earliest Arabic Christian literature, which takes shape following a period of renewed anti-Jewish polemic on the part of Christians living within the *Dār al-Islām*,<sup>(138)</sup> shares fully in the traditional theological anti-Judaism. The Christian-Muslim-Jewish controversial "triangle" in the *Dār al-Islām* did produce new Christian apologetic tactics,<sup>(139)</sup> but whether Christians tried to make common cause with Muslims against the Jews or to assimilate Islam theologically to Judaism, the anti-Judaism underlying the procedure is obvious. There can therefore be no surprise when, for example, we find the Jews described with the epithet *qātilat Allāh* ("God-killers") in Abū Rā'īṭah's first epistle on the *Trisagion* addition,<sup>(140)</sup> or when the Jews are described as *ahl ṭā'at al-Šayṭān* ("the people of Satan's obedience") in Abū Qurrah's "On the Necessity of Redemption."<sup>(141)</sup>

This Christian insistence on the guilt of the Jews provided alert Muslim writers with polemical opportunities. For example, in the part of his *al-Radd 'alā l-Naṣārā* preserved only in fragments cited by al-Šafī b. al-'Assāl, 'Alī al-Ṭabarī pointed out what he believed to be a contradiction in the Christians' scripture: "He was not a savior to the Jews, although it is said 'To you is born this day a savior' [Luke 2:11]."<sup>(142)</sup> If this could be easily answered -- after all, many Jews *did* come to faith in Christ<sup>(143)</sup> -- what of Christ's own prayer from the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34)?

We do not find this question in any ninth-century Muslim text at our disposal, but it is dealt with in apologetic contexts by both 'Ammār al-Baṣrī in his *Kitāb al-masā'il wa-l-ağwibah* and by the author of *al-Ġāmi' wuğūh al-īmān*. It is the author of *al-Ġāmi'*, in his Chapter 17 responding to questions about the gospels from those who take verses out of context, who has the simplest response: Christ prayed for his *Roman* crucifiers. As for the Jews, they knew perfectly well what they were doing, and will never be forgiven.<sup>(144)</sup>

'Ammār goes into the matter in considerably greater depth. His "questioner" had claimed that the Jews deserve forgiveness on *two* counts: because Christ prayed "Father, forgive them" *and* because Christ himself admitted that "they do not know what they are doing".<sup>(145)</sup> 'Ammār begins his response by reviewing the various explanations of "Father, forgive them" with which he was familiar: (a) Christ prayed for the Father's temporary forbearance, so that the Jews might complete their transgression and the Father take comprehensive vengeance later (as happened at the

137. See the references in LAMPE, *Lexicon* (1961), 1531, 1533, 626.

138. See above, pp. 120–21.

139. See GRIFFITH, "Jews" (1988).

140. GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭa* (1951), 90/15.

141. BACHA, *Mayāmīr* (1904), 87/2.

142. «ولم يكن مخلصاً لليهود، وقد قيل «وُلد لكم اليوم مخلص»؛ MURQUS ĠIRĠIS, *Šaḥā'ih* (1927–28), 119/9–10.

143. This is al-Šafī's response; *ibid*, lines 10–12.

144. BL or. 4950, f. 110<sup>r v</sup>.

145. In *Kitāb al-masā'il wa-l-ağwibah*, IV,41, HAYEK, *Apologie* (1977), 243\*–47\*.

hands of Titus). (b) Christ prayed for the Father's temporary forbearance so that some of the Jews might have a chance to repent. (c) Christ indeed prayed for the forgiveness of all his crucifiers. (d) Christ prayed for forgiveness -- but only for the Romans. 'Ammār is satisfied with none of these explanations. He does not believe that the point of Christ's prayer is to ask for *either* forbearance (as in (a) and (b)) *or* forgiveness (as in (c) and (d)). Instead, he who had taught his followers to pray for their persecutors (Matthew 5:44) *gives an example*, while hanging on the cross, of the kind of prayer that earns a heavenly reward. But his prayer is *solely* an example: "he did not intend with his prayer for forgiveness to request forgiveness for them!"<sup>(146)</sup> If he had intended that they be forgiven, he could have forgiven them *himself*, since the gospels plainly show that he had the authority to forgive sins (and to confer this authority upon others). And thus "the Jews received no benefit from Christ's prayer for their forgiveness, . . . rather, it added shame to their shame and torment to their torment".<sup>(147)</sup>

As for the second part of Christ's prayer, "they do not know what they are doing", this merely means that in their ignorance the Jews had not recognized Christ's divinity and lordship -- and thus dared to do what they did to Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:8). They are not judged or forgiven on the basis of this ignorance, but are condemned on the basis of their ungrateful reception of the one who came among them doing nothing but good.

This exegesis of Luke 23:34 will undoubtedly strike modern readers as strange, but it provides a striking example of the extent to which the guilt of the Jews for the crucifixion of Christ was for a ninth-century Middle Eastern Christian apologist simply a given, with which any evidence to the contrary had to be interpreted into conformity.

### 3. Both/and?

Christ freely chose to undergo crucifixion and death, in order to fulfill his saving purposes. The Jews are responsible -- and guilty -- for Christ's crucifixion and death. For the Christian Fathers -- and for Arabic-speaking Christians under Abbasid rule -- *both* statements were givens. But could they be held together? How could the Jews be held guilty for acting in a manner that fulfilled Christ's salvific will? St. John Chrysostom touched on the dilemma when he asked (without afterwards giving a real answer), "Tell me, are the Jews to be praised because they crucified Christ?"<sup>(148)</sup>

146. . . . لا أنه تعمّد باستغفاره طلب المغفرة لهم. . . .; *ibid.*, 245\*/8.

147. . . . لا نفع لليهود في دعاء المسيح بالمغفرة لهم، . . . بل زادهم خزيًا إلى حزيهم، وعذابًا إلى عذابهم. . . .; *ibid.*, 245\*/20–246\*/2.

148. Ἐπαινεῖς, εἰπέ μοι, τοὺς Ἰουδαίους, ὅτι τὸν Χριστὸν ἐσταύρωσαν; *Adv. Jud.* 8,5, cited in STOCKMEIER, *Chrysostomus* (1966), 133.

## B. The Crucified: Willing? His Crucifiers: Guilty?

### 1. The dilemma and the Muslim controversialists

In the catholicos Timothy's account of his dialogue with the Abbasid caliph al-Mahdī, the latter responded to Timothy's assertion that Christ gave himself over to death freely with the comment: "The Jews, then, have no blame [attaching to them] in the matter of his death, if they accomplished and fulfilled his will!"<sup>(149)</sup> Shortly afterwards, al-Mahdī formulated this perception as a dilemma-question:<sup>(150)</sup>

Which of the two do you say: was Christ willing to be crucified, or not?

If he was willing to be crucified, why then are the Jews who fulfilled his will cursed and despised?

But if he was not willing to be crucified, and he was crucified [all the same], he was weak whereas the Jews were strong. How can he be called "God" who was unable to deliver himself from the hands of his crucifiers, whose will appeared much stronger than his?

A half-century and more later, essentially the same dilemma appeared in Abū 'Īsā al-Warrāq's *Kitāb al-radd 'alā l-firaq al-ṭalāṭ min al-Naṣārā*. If the occasion for al-Mahdī's dilemma-question was Timothy's assertion of Christ's freedom, the context of Abū 'Īsā's version of the question was a discussion of God's *tadbīr*. Abū 'Īsā had heard Melkite Christians claim that "God died according to his *tadbīr*," where *tadbīr* represents the Greek οἰκονομία and the Syriac *mdabrānūtā*: not only God's world-rule (which is also denoted by the Arabic verb *dabbara* in the Qur'ān),<sup>(151)</sup> but also His "ways among things human," particularly in the Incarnation of the Word.<sup>(152)</sup> In his attempt to demonstrate the nonsensical nature of the Christian claim, Abū 'Īsā distinguished between two aspects comprised by the verb *dabbara* in its normal usage: that of the ordinance or arrangement of a plan or activity, and that of its execution. He then saw three possibilities for interpreting the phrase "God died according to his *tadbīr*": (1) God ordained and carried out His own death; or (2) God ordained that creatures carry out His death; or (3) creatures ordained and carried out His death. Abū 'Īsā worked out these possibilities as follows:<sup>(153)</sup>

149. Syriac text in MINGANA, "Apology" (1928), 116/1/8–10. For this and the following citation see also the Arabic versions in CASPAR, "Versions" (1977), 143 (#34–35), and PUTMAN/SAMIR, *Église* (1975), 39\* (#207, 210).

150. MINGANA, "Apology" (1928), 116/2/1–10.

151. E.g., *Yūnis* (10):3: ثَمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يَدْبِرُ الْأَمْرَ ("... then sat Himself upon the Throne, directing the affair").

152. For the wide range of christological uses of οἰκονομία, see LAMPE, *Lexicon* (1961), 941–42.

153. PLATTI, *Incarnation* (1987), 77–78 (#68).

1 ثمّ يقال لهم:

2 إن زعموا أنّ ذلك تدبير الإله، كيف استجزتم واستحسنتم أن تزعموا أنّ الإله دبّر قتل نفسه وصلب نفسه؟

3 وإذا كان هو الذي دبّر ذلك لخلقه، فلا شيء أصوب من تدبيره، ولا من شيء أجرى إليه تدبيره، 4 ولا أحد من المخلوقين أصوب فعلاً، ولا أحكم عملاً وتديراً، ممّن جرى على تدبير دبّره له الخالق، وعمل عملاً أجرى للإله (تعالى!) بالتدبير الذي دبّره إلى كونه وتماحه. 5 فالذين قتلوه وصلبوه على هذا القول مُصيبون إذًا، مُحسنون! 6 وصلبه وقتله كانا أولى الأشياء بهم، وأصحّ تدبير دبّروه وفعل فعلوه، إن كان هو الذي دبّر ذلك وأجرى إليه حتّى ناله ووقع به. 7 وإن زعموا أنّ ذلك تدبير المخلوقين عليه، لا بمشيئته<sup>(1)</sup> ولا بتدبيره، قلنا:

8 فهذا غير ما وهمتم بذكركم «نيل ذلك إيّاه بالتدبير لا بالحسّ ولا بالمباشرة». 9 وفيه أنكم، متى أنصفتهم وصحّحتهم على أصولكم، كنتم بذلك موجبين أنّ الخلق قهروه وغلبوه وضربوه وأذلّوه وصلبوه وقتلوه وأماتوه ودفنوه! 10 وإذا أمكن أن ينالوه ببعض هذا، أمكن أن ينالوه بغيره من ضرور الأذى والمكاره؛ وإن كان في بعض هذا ما كفى! 11 وإذا جاز هذا عليه، جاز عليه كلّ ما قدّمنا ذكره، وإن كان القتل أكثر من ذلك كلّّه؛ 12 ولكن بعض ذلك عندكم أبعد، وأنتم له أشدّ كراهة. 13 وجواز هذه الأمور عليه تدخله (على أصولكم) في صفات المُحدّثين المخلوقين. 14 تعالى إلّٰهنا وسيّدنا عن صفات الذمّ والنقص علوّاً كثيراً!

(1) Ed. بمشيئته.

#### TRANSLATION:

1 Next, let it be said to them:

2 If they claim that [the *tadbīr* according to which "God died"] was God's ordinance and execution, how do you deem permissible and right that they should claim that God ordained and carried out the killing and crucifixion of *Himself*?

3 And if it was He who ordained that [act of killing and crucifying] for His creatures [to carry out], [realize that] there is nothing more correct than His ordinance and that which His ordinance brings to pass; 4 and no creature is more correct in his activity, or more precise in deed and execution, than the one who proceeds according to the ordinance the Creator has ordained for him, and who does the deed which affects God (may He be exalted!) according to the ordinance that He ordained should

be and be brought to fulfillment.

5 Therefore, according to this line of argument, those who killed and crucified Him acted correctly and rightly! 6 Their acts of crucifying and killing Him were the most appropriate things for them [to have done], and the truest enactment and activity they could have undertaken, as long as it was *He* who ordained them and caused them to come to pass, so that they attained and befell Him.

7 And if they claim that [the *tadbīr* according to which "God died"] was the ordinance and execution of *creatures* with respect to Him, and not according to *His* will and His ordinance, we say:

8 This is other than what you presume in your statement, "That [death] attained Him according to *tadbīr*, not according to sense or physical proximity." 9 This means, if you follow your principles justly and truly, that you are obliged [to conclude] that creatures subjugated [the Creator], defeated Him, beat Him, humiliated Him, crucified Him, killed Him, put Him to death, and buried Him! 10 For if it is possible that they subjected Him to *some* of these things, then it is possible that they subjected Him to *other* sorts of injury and adversity, although *some* is sufficient!

11 If these things are permissible with respect to Him, then all that we have previously mentioned is permissible with respect to Him, even if being killed is the worst of all these things; 12 but you treat some of these things as more improbable, reacting to them with the strongest revulsion.

13 Making these matters permissible with respect to Him is to place Him in [the category of things described by] the attributes of temporal creatures! 14 May our God and Lord be greatly exalted above the attributes of disparagement and deficiency (*ṣifāt al-ḍamm wa-l-naqṣ*)!

Once the first possibility (a sort of divine suicide) is dismissed, what remains is essentially the same dilemma that we heard from al-Mahdī, but now in the form: did creatures (i.e., the Jews) kill God (i.e., Christ) according to his ordinance, or not?<sup>(154)</sup> If according to his ordinance, they acted rightly. And if not, then there can be no end to "the attributes of disparagement and deficiency" that may be predicated of God!

If al-Mahdī and Abū 'Īsā al-Warrāq came to the dilemma from the side of the will of Christ (in particular, its freedom) or of God (as comprised in His *tadbīr*), 'Alī al-Ṭabarī came to it from the opposite side: the guilt of the Jews. In his *al-Radd 'alā l-Naṣārā*, having discussed the contradiction between Luke 2:11 ("to you [Jews] is born this day a savior")<sup>(155)</sup> and the usual Christian affirmations concerning the Jews, he wrote:<sup>(156)</sup>

154. This construal of the dilemma, in which it is God's control of events rather than Christ's freedom that is at issue, appears in the Greek "Controversy between a Saracen and a Christian," (PG 94, 1335–48; the passage in question here is at 1340D) attributed sometimes to John of Damascus, sometimes to Theodore Abū Qurrah (see A.-T. KHOURY, *Théologiens* (1969), 68–82; SAHAS, *Heresy* (1970), 99–102). It had earlier been addressed by St. Augustine of Hippo; see BLUMENKRANZ, *Judenpredigt* (1946), 190.

155. See above, p. 195.

156. According to the brief citations in the refutation of al-Ṣafī b. al-'Assāl. I have edited the text from Vatican ar. 33 (Egypt, 1305 A.D.), ff. 146<sup>r</sup>–147<sup>r</sup> [A], Vat. ar. 38 (Egypt, 1361 A.D.), f. 109<sup>r</sup> [B]; MURQUS ĠIRĠAS, *Ṣaḥā'ih* (1927–28), 119–120 [C].

. . . صَلَّبَ المسيح، إن كان بإرادة الله والمسيح، وموجباً<sup>(1)</sup> لخلاص العالم من الخطيئة والموت، فللشيطان واليهود حظ في هذه المَكْرُمة! وإن كان المسيح في ذلك مُكْرَهاً مجبوراً،<sup>(2)</sup> فهو مذموم لا محمود! . . .

ولليهود<sup>(3)</sup> أن يعتذروا يوم القيامة بأنهم إنما قصدوا [A: f. 147<sup>r</sup>] وعملوا<sup>(4)</sup> ما علموا<sup>(5)</sup> أن فيه رضى الله!

الله. (5) C: omit. (4) C: omit. (3) A: لليهود. (2) B: مجبراً. (1) C: موجباً.

#### TRANSLATION:

[As for] the crucifixion of Christ, if it was according to the will of God and of Christ, and if it was obligatory for the salvation of the world from sin and death, then Satan and the Jews have good fortune in this noble deed! But if Christ was coerced and compelled in that [crucifixion], then he is to be disparaged rather than praised! . . .

On the Day of Resurrection the Jews will have the right to plead that they merely intended and did that which they knew had the approval of God!

A final example of Muslim use of the dilemma-question suggests that it probably circulated independently as a highly-regarded fragment of polemic that controversialists could insert into their conversations or their writings wherever convenient. In "The Story of Wāṣil" the dilemma appears as one of a series of unconnected polemical sallies:<sup>(157)</sup>

قال الشيخ: أسألك، بني، هل عبدتم الصليب مثلاً لعيسى بن مريم،  
لأنه<sup>(1)</sup> صَلَّب؟  
قال بشير: نعم.  
قال الشيخ: فبرضاء كان منه، أم بسخط؟  
قال بشير: هذه أخت تلك! ماذا تريد أن تقول؟ إن قلتُ «برضى  
منه»، قلتُ: «ما نعمتم. أعطوا ما سألوا وأرادوا»<sup>(2)</sup>! وإن قلتُ «بسخط»،  
قلتُ: «فلِمَ تعبدون ما لا يمنع نفسه؟»

أعطى ما سألوه وأرادوه. (2) Ed. sic. (1) Ed. أنه.

157. GRIFFITH, "Bashir" (1990), 318. The dilemma of Christ's freedom and the Jews' guilt follows a question concerning Christ's "two spirits in a single body," and precedes the question of to whom Christ's prayer was addressed.

## TRANSLATION:

The *šayḥ* said: I ask you, my son: do you worship the cross as a sign of ʾĪsā b. Maryam, because he was crucified?

Bašīr said: Yes.

The *šayḥ* said: Was this with his approval, or with disapproval?

Bašīr said: This is like the previous [dilemma-question]! What do you want to say? If I say, "With his approval," you will say: "How blessed you are. They [*sic*] were given what they [*sic*] asked for and desired." And if I say, "With disapproval," you will say: "Then why do you worship that which cannot protect itself?"

## 2. The dilemma and the Christian controversialists

The efficacy with which Muslim controversialists wielded the dilemma-question concerning the freedom of Christ's death and the guilt of the Jews is reflected in the fact that nearly all of their Christian counterparts – the catholicos Timothy,<sup>(158)</sup> Abū Qurrah,<sup>(159)</sup> Abū Rāʾiṭah,<sup>(160)</sup> ʿAmmār al-Bašrī,<sup>(161)</sup> Eustathius,<sup>(162)</sup> the author of *al-Ġāmiʿ wuḡūh al-īmān*<sup>(163)</sup> – found themselves obliged to respond to it.<sup>(164)</sup>

### (a) Counter-questions

While each of these authors responded in his own way, nearly all of them – ʿAmmār al-Bašrī is the one exception<sup>(165)</sup> -- follow the program enunciated by the catholicos Timothy: "I responded to these [questions] with other questions, as follows . . ."<sup>(166)</sup> The *counter*-questions and -examples with which Christian apologists replied to the Muslims' dilemma-question were of two main types.

#### (i) God and the fact of creaturely disobedience

The first type involves the application of the very same dilemma pressed by the Muslim controversialists to acts of rebellion against God *other* than the Jews' crucifixion of Christ. Consider, for example, the response of the monk Eustathius:<sup>(167)</sup>

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158. Syriac text in MINGANA, "Apology" (1928), 116/1/8–120/1/19 [ET 43–47]. Arabic versions: CASPAR, "Versions" (1977), 143–46 (#34–38); PUTMAN/SAMIR, *Église* (1975), 39\*–40\* (#207–13).
159. "On Christ's Freely Chosen Death," GRIFFITH, "Sayings" (1979), or SAMIR, "Ṣalb" (1984), 417–19.
160. In "On the Incarnation," GRAF, *Abū Rāʾiṭa* (1951), 60–63 (#32–33).
161. In the *Kitāb al-masāʾil wa-l-aḡwibah*, IV,40, HAYEK, *Apologie* (1977), 242\*–43\*.
162. In the *Kitāb Uṣṭāṭ*, Mingana chr. ar. 52, ff. 49<sup>v</sup>–51<sup>r</sup>.
163. Chapter 18, #5, BL or. 4950, f. 119<sup>r</sup><sup>v</sup>; SAMIR, "Ṣalb" (1984), 414–17.
164. A survey of some of this material is found in SAMIR, "Somme" (1986), 111–17.
165. For his response, see pp. 203–4 below.
166. MINGANA, "Apology" (1928), 116/2/10–11.
167. Mingana chr. ar. 52, ff. 49<sup>v</sup>–50<sup>r</sup>.

- 1 فيقال له<sup>(1)</sup>: ما أنت رادّ على امرء<sup>(2)</sup> من مهرة الجدل ومغمضي النظر يقول لك، «أرأيت الله (جلّت أسماؤه!)، أقادر هو أم غير ذلك؟»
- 2 فإن كان قادراً، فما تقول في أهل المعاصي من فنون السحر والقتل والزنا، وغير ذلك من الفواحش؛ 3 وعابدي الأوثان، ثمّ المشركين [f. 50<sup>r</sup>] والزنادقة، وما أشبه ذلك من أنواع الكفر؛ 4 ثمّ الذين قتلوا أنبيائه، الذين أيدهم بقوّته وخصّهم بوحيه وأكرمهم برسالته؛ 5 ثمّ شيطنة الشيطان بعد أن كان ملاكاً<sup>3</sup> أرفع الملائكة، تجرّاً فطغاً، وقال إنه إله وإنه ربّ؟ 6 أبرضا الله كان ذلك، أو بغير رضاه؟»
- 7 فإن قال: «كان ذلك برضا منه»، قلنا: «إنه لا جُناح<sup>(3)</sup> على أحد ممّن كفر، فيما قد كان منه وارثكبه وقَدِم عليه!
- 8 وإن قال: «بغير رضا»، يجاب بمثل ما أوّماً إليه من العجز، ويقال له: «ما موضع قدرته، إذا فعلت<sup>(4)</sup> أفعال بغير رضا منه؟»
- 9 لكنّا نقول إنّ الله قد جعل التعويض إذا عمل<sup>(5)</sup> للعاملين بالطاعة والمعصية. 10 فمن أطاع، تُبّت في طاعته في الحسنى، عدلاً عليه؛ ومن عصى، جوزي بمعصيته، بلا حَقّ عليه؛ 11 من غير أن ينال (تبارك وتعالى!) مضرّة، لكن ضرر المعصية والسخط عليهم، إمّا عاجلاً وإمّا أجلاً يوم الدين.

(1) MS لهم. (2) MS امري. (3) MS جنح. (4) MS فعل. (5) Sic. I am uncertain of the function of this phrase.

#### TRANSLATION:

1 Let it be said to him: What do you respond to the man from among the expert disputers and insight-obscurers who says to you: "What do you think of God (may His names be exalted!): is He omnipotent (*qādir*) or otherwise? 2 And if He is omnipotent, what then do you say about people given to acts of disobedience (*ahl al-mā'āṣi*), such as the arts of magic, murder, and adultery, and other obscene things? 3 Or about idolaters, and also polytheists (*mušrikīn*), atheists (*zanādiqah*), and so on from among the kinds of unbelief (*kufr*)? 4 Or furthermore about those who killed the prophets, whom He supported with His power, favored with His revelation, and honored with His message? 5 Or finally about the "satanic-ness" of Satan (*ṣayṭanat al-Ṣayṭān*), who, after he had been the most exalted of the angels, made bold and overstepped his bounds, claiming to be a God and a Lord? 6 Did [all] that occur with God's approval, or without His approval?"

7 If he says: "That occurred with God's approval," we say: "[Then] no sin (*ḡunāḥ*) is ascribed to anyone who disbelieves, regardless of what he did or committed or dared!"

8 And if he says: "Without approval," then he is obliged to admit the like of what he indicated [in *his* dilemma-question] with respect to the weakness [of God], and it may be said to him: "What is the proper meaning of His 'power,' if deeds are done without His approval?"

9 But we say that God has set recompense for the doers of obedience and of disobedience. 10 The one who obeys is made fast in his obedience for a happy outcome, out of justice to him; the one who disobeys is punished for his disobedience, without rancor towards him; 11 and God (may He be blessed and exalted!) does not

suffer any harm, but the harm created through disobedience and the disapproval are upon them [who disobeyed], either now or later, on the Day of Judgment.

Other examples of human (and angelic/demonic) sinfulness and rebellion may be added to those given by Eustathius. The catholicos Timothy discussed Adam's expulsion from Paradise.<sup>(168)</sup> Abū Rā'īṭah brought up the death of the (Muslim) martyrs.<sup>(169)</sup> And both Abū Rā'īṭah and Abū Qurrah mentioned the case of blasphemy (*al-iftirā'*) against God, Abū Rā'īṭah citing *al-Nisā'* (4):50, انظر كيف يفترون على الله الكذب ("See how they invent lies about God!"),<sup>(170)</sup> and Abū Qurrah personalizing the issue by asking his interlocutor directly, "Don't you claim that we [Christians] blaspheme against your God?"<sup>(171)</sup> In each and every case, one can pose the exact same question posed by the Muslims with respect to the death of Christ: did this take place with God's approval, or not? If *with* God's approval, those who committed these acts of rebellion and disobedience are blameless. If *without* God's approval, then God is weak!

The point, of course, is that the Muslims' debate-question poses a dilemma as difficult for the Muslims themselves as it is for Christians, a dilemma which can only be resolved by means of a careful reflection about the relationship between divine sovereignty and creaturely disobedience. Eustathius began such reflection in the final paragraph cited above. Acts of human (and angelic) disobedience do *not* prove God weak, nor do Him any harm, but will all be requited, though perhaps not before the Day of Judgment.

## (ii) Evil intentions, good outcomes

A second kind of response to the Muslim dilemma-question involves the rather obvious distinction to be made between *intention* and *outcome*. 'Ammār al-Baṣrī,<sup>(172)</sup> for example, points out that, at least in "the justice of God's judgment and the uprightness of His ways,"<sup>(173)</sup> it is "through intention (*niyyah*) and conscience (*ḍamīr*) that the servant merits the reward from his lord, and through them that he deserves the worst of punishment."<sup>(174)</sup> As for the Jews, they crucified Christ out of hostility, *not* out of a desire to benefit humankind, and God will punish them according to

168. Syriac text in MINGANA, "Apology" (1928), 117/1/3–2/4 [ET 44]. See also the Arabic version in PUTMAN/SAMIR, *Église* (1975), 40\* (#213).

169. أراض الله بقتل شهدائه، أم كاره؟ ("Does God approve of the death of His martyrs, or is He averse to it?"), in "On the Incarnation," GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭah* (1951), 62 (#32).

170. In "On the Incarnation," GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭah* (1951), 62 (#33).

171. أليس تزعم أننا نفتري على إلهك؟ SAMIR, "Ṣalb" (1984), 418 (#4).

172. In the *Kitāb al-masā'il wa-l-aḡwibah*, IV,40, HAYEK, *Apologie* (1977), 242\*–43\*.

173. في عدل قضاء الله واستقامة سبيله, *ibid.*, 242\*/13.

174. أنه بالنية والضمير يستوجب العبد من ربه الثواب، وبهما يستحق منه سوء العقاب, *ibid.*, 243\*/15–16.

their evil intentions.

While 'Ammār is content with a simple statement of the intention/outcome distinction and its application to the case of the Jews' crucifixion of Christ, other apologists, notably Timothy and Abū Qurrah, offer vivid illustrations of this distinction as part of their response to the Muslim dilemma-question. A first example is common to Timothy and Abū Qurrah: that of the Muslim killed while fighting *fī sabīl Allāh* ("in the way of God"). Timothy phrases it as follows:<sup>(175)</sup>

What does our victorious and mighty king say concerning those who go out as *muṭṭawwīn bi-sabīl Allāh* ("volunteers in the way of God")?<sup>(176)</sup> are they willing to die, or not? If they are not willing to die, then their death merits no reward and they are shut out from Paradise. But if they are willing to die, are those who kill them blameworthy or not? If they are not blameworthy, how is it that unbelievers who kill Muslims and believers not be blameworthy? But if they are blameworthy, how is it that they be deserving of blame when they [merely] accomplished and fulfilled their will?

Just as there is no deliverance from the Fire and Hell for those who kill believers — though they be willing to die *bi-sabīl Allāh*! — since they did not kill them in order that they enter Paradise, but rather out of bitterness, in order to destroy them; so also there is no deliverance from the eternal Fire for the Jews — though Jesus Christ was willing to be crucified and to die for the sake of all! — since they did not crucify him because he willed to be crucified, but rather it was because *they* willed it that they crucified him. It was not in order that he live again and rise from the dead that they crucified him, but rather in order that he be utterly destroyed.

Theodore Abū Qurrah (and, following him, the author of *al-Ġāmi'*<sup>(177)</sup> and a redactor of the "Abū Qurrah debate"<sup>(178)</sup>) offers the same example, but "personalized";<sup>(179)</sup> he asks his Muslim interlocutor to imagine that it is his own beloved brother who is killed by a Byzantine warrior while raiding in Byzantine territory, and allows the Muslim to conclude for himself that the Byzantine warrior deserves death because of his evil intention, even if he had in fact dispatched the brother to Paradise. Abū Qurrah (and his followers) pairs this example with a second. He asks his interlocutor to imagine that he has an abcess in his eye causing him unbearable pain. An enemy directs at the eye what he intends to be a mortal blow, but instead, the blow opens the abcess and heals the eye! Once again the Muslim is asked about an appropriate requital, and once again the response is that the enemy deserves death because the *intention* behind his act was evil, even if its *outcome* was good. So it is, concludes Abū Qurrah, with the Jews who crucified Christ.

Returning to Timothy's discussion with the caliph al-Mahdī, we find two further illustrations of the intention/outcome distinction. One is the story, common to

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175. My translation of the Syriac text in MINGANA, "Apology" (1928), 117/2/15–118/1/14. This is quite closely followed by the Arabic version in CASPAR, "Versions" (1977), 144 (#36).

176. The Syriac simply transliterates the Arabic expression, with a Syriac *b-* instead of the Arabic *fī*.

177. See note 163 above.

178. See below, pp. 206–8.

179. In "On Christ's Freely Chosen Death," GRIFFITH, "Sayings" (1979), or SAMIR, "Ṣalb" (1984), 417–19.

the Bible and the Qur'ān, of Joseph and his brothers.<sup>(180)</sup> The brothers were surely culpable for their envy-motivated act of selling Joseph into slavery in Egypt, even though the eventual outcome of their act -- his appointment as administrator of Egypt's harvests and grain stores -- was for the good of many.<sup>(181)</sup> And finally,<sup>(182)</sup> Timothy has al-Mahdī imagine that he planned to demolish a certain palace in order to build a better one, but did not carry out his plan before an enemy razed and burned it. Timothy leaves it to al-Mahdī to pronounce sentence: "The one who did this would deserve a cruel death."<sup>(183)</sup> So it is, Timothy concludes, drawing on a favorite Antiochene christological analogy, with the Jews who wanted to destroy the temple of the Word of God.

(iii) The popularity of the responses

Christian apologists found the counter-questions of both types studied above to be effective, and Timothy's and Abū Qurrah's formulations came to have a lively literary history. For example, in the *beta*-recension of the Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī debate we find a passage which derives from Timothy's discussion of the death of Christ, including parts of his response to the question about the guilt of the Jews: the counter-questions concerning Satan's fall, and Adam's expulsion from Paradise.<sup>(184)</sup>

The literary history of Abū Qurrah's little statement "On Christ's Freely Chosen Death," preserved in Sinai ar. 72 (Mār Charitōn, 897 A.D.), is even more extensive and complex. It is the precursor of:

- (α) The Greek translation/adaptation preserved as Abū Qurrah's *opusculum* 9.<sup>(185)</sup> Griffith has compared this with the Arabic statement, showing that the Arabic is (or is closer to) the original, the Greek *opusculum* revealing modifications made in order to elucidate certain points (such as the Islamic understanding of death in *ḡihād*) for a Greek audience and to assimilate the Arabic conversational form to the Greek ἐρώτησις καὶ ἀπόκρισις polemical form.<sup>(186)</sup> Also in Greek, the

180. Syriac text in MINGANA, "Apology" (1928), 119/2/2–19. Arabic version in CASPAR, "Versions" (1977), 145 (#37).

181. Cf. Genesis 50:20.

182. Syriac text in MINGANA, "Apology" (1928), 119/2/19–120/1/19. Arabic version in CASPAR, "Versions" (1977), 146 (#38).

183. MINGANA, "Apology" (1928), 120/1/6–7.

184. The passage in question follows *verset* #258 of the edition of MARCUZZO, *Dialogue* (1986), 383, and may be read in (for example) Paris ar. 215, ff. 60<sup>v</sup>–62<sup>v</sup>; Vatican ar. 136, ff. 107<sup>r</sup>–110<sup>v</sup>; Vatican syr. 608, ff. 81<sup>v</sup>–83<sup>v</sup>; VOLLERS, "Religionsgespräch" (1908), 57–60. It may be compared with Timothy's dialogue in MINGANA, "Apology" (1928), 115/2/1–117/2/15 [ET 42–44] (or the Arabic versions: CASPAR, "Versions" (1977), 142–44 (#33–35) and PUTMAN/SAMIR, *Église* (1975), 38\*–40\* (#203–16)). The agreement of the addition with Timothy's text, especially in the original Syriac, is frequently word for word.

185. PG 97, 1529–1530.

example of the abcess in the eye was taken up in "The Letter of Arethas to the Emir at Damascus," which may well date from 920 or 921.<sup>(187)</sup>

- (β) *Mas'alah* 5 of Chapter 18 of *al-Ġāmi' wuḡūh al-īmān*,<sup>(188)</sup> which presents the Muslim dilemma-question and the counter-examples of the brother killed while fighting *fī sabīl Allāh* and of the abcess in the eye. Samir has made a detailed comparison of *mas'alah* 5 with Abū Qurrah's Arabic statement,<sup>(189)</sup> and, while admitting their source in a common polemical and theological environment, emphasizes the texts' mutual independence and rules out any copying of one from the other.<sup>(190)</sup> While it is indeed true that no mechanical copying is involved in the relationship between the two texts, I believe that their comparison does show that the author of *al-Ġāmi'* was familiar with the "Abū Qurran" response to the Muslim dilemma-question, whether in the form preserved in Sinai ar. 72 or in a slightly elaborated form. He does not simply copy another's text, however, but reproduces its content in his own more powerful style.<sup>(191)</sup>
- (γ) Passages in the recension of the "Abū Qurrah debate" represented by Paris ar. 70<sup>(192)</sup> and 258.<sup>(193)</sup> The material of Abū Qurrah's "On Christ's Freely Chosen Death" is nearly all here: the Muslim dilemma-question, the counter-question about the Christians' blasphemy, the example of the brother who was killed (here, though, in a very corrupt form),<sup>(194)</sup> and, after a digression, the example of the abcess in the eye (told in a way that shares a number of features with the corresponding text in *al-Ġāmi'*).<sup>(195)</sup>

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186. GRIFFITH, *Theology* (1978), 50–59.

187. KARLIN-HAYTER, "Letter" (1959–60), 299/13–23 [FT ABEL, "Lettre" (1954), 366].

188. BL or. 4950, f. 119<sup>r</sup>v, SAMIR, "Ṣalb" (1984), 414–17.

189. Ibid., 420–21.

190. Ibid., 421.

191. This is Samir's judgment, *ibid.*

192. ff. 192<sup>r</sup>–193<sup>v</sup>, 212<sup>r</sup>–214<sup>r</sup>. The displacement of pages in this manuscript has caused some scholars confusion (which can be avoided by following the Coptic page numeration).

193. ff. 246<sup>r</sup>–247<sup>r</sup>. Unfortunately, the ink of this manuscript has run very badly in places, making reading extremely difficult.

194. In Paris ar. 70, f. 193<sup>r</sup>, the counter-question contains no reference to raiding in Byzantine territory, but appears rather to refer to vengeance taken in a blood feud. This may represent an attempt to make sense of a passage from which some lines had been lost. The passage in Paris ar. 258, f. 246<sup>v</sup> is also defective (in addition to being practically illegible), but clearly refers to *al-'ilġ* ("the infidel") or *al-Rūmī* ("the Byzantine") who intended, at least, to kill the brother of one of the Muslims.

195. In these texts one is to imagine that it is the ruler (*al-malik* or *al-sultān*) who authorizes the narrator to beat the interlocutor (with the abcessed eye) wherever he likes. The narrator strikes at the eye, intending to do the greatest possible harm; but the abcess bursts and drains, and the pain is relieved.

	Timothy	Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī (β recension)	Abū Qurrah	<i>al-Ġāmi'</i> <i>wuḡūh</i> <i>al-i mān</i>	"Abū Qurrah" debate	Abū Rā'itah	Eustathius
Satan's fall	1	1					3
Adam's fall	2	2					
Various forms of unbelief							1
Killing the prophets							2
Killing the martyrs						1	
Blasphemy			1		1	2	
Those who fight <i>fī sabīl Allāh</i>	3		2	1	2		
The boil in the eye			3	2	3		
Joseph and his brothers	4						
The king's palace	5						

**TABLE:** The Crucified: willing? His crucifiers: guilty?  
The Christian apologists' counter-questions and counter-examples

- (δ) Passages in the yet more elaborately developed recension of the "Abū Qurrah debate" represented by Paris ar. 198<sup>(196)</sup> and 215<sup>(197)</sup>. Again, all the material of Abū Qurrah's Arabic *qawl* is here, though the trajectory that leads from it, through *al-Ġāmi'* and the earlier recensions of the "Abū Qurrah" debate, here comes to a much expanded and embroidered presentation designed to make the most of the material and to give the reader the "feel" of a debate – and a smashing Christian victory – at the court of al-Ma'mūn.

Just as the dilemma-question concerning the freedom of Christ's death and the guilt of the Jews became an independent polemical fragment that Muslim controversialists could use as they pleased, so too the Christian counter-examples had a life of their own. They could circulate independently (as in the case of Abū Qurrah's Arabic *qawl* and its Greek translation/adaptation), be taken up into rather random collections of apologetic questions and answers (as in Chapter 18 of *al-Ġāmi'*), or be inserted into popular debate texts (such as those of Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī and of Theodore Abū Qurrah). It is perhaps worth recalling that the Islamic texts that we reviewed do not record or respond to any of the Christian counter-questions or -examples. If the dilemma-question was popular in Muslim circles, and the counter-questions in Christian ones, there is little evidence in our sources for the existence of a third level of discussion.<sup>(198)</sup> It was enough for both Muslim and Christian controversialists to present arguments that appeared plausible, first and foremost in the eyes of members of their own communities.

(b) *De-horning the dilemma grammatically*

A unique and important response to the Muslims' dilemma-question is that of Ḥabīb b. Ḥidmah Abū Rā'īṭah in his "On the Incarnation."<sup>(199)</sup> Abū Rā'īṭah draws upon the categories of that most fundamental of Islamic sciences, Arabic grammar. He points out that the Arabic *maṣḍar* or verbal noun is ambiguous, having both an active and a passive sense. So it is with verbal nouns such as *qatl*, "killing," or *ṣalb*, "crucifixion": one can speak of *the Jews'* crucifixion (of Christ) or of *Christ's*

196. ff. 72<sup>v</sup>–77<sup>r</sup>.

197. ff. 255<sup>r</sup>–257<sup>v</sup>.

198. In his "On the Incarnation," Abū Rā'īṭah mentions a possible objection to his use of the counter-question concerning blasphemy (*al-iftirā'*) against God: the counter-question is not analogous to the original dilemma-question, because blasphemy does not reach God, while the Christians ascribe death to Him! Abū Rā'īṭah responds that (i) the fact that blasphemy does not harm God does not excuse the blasphemer, (ii) and in any case, even crucifixion and death do not reach the incarnate God *in his divine essence*, and therefore the questions are indeed analogous. See GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭah* (1951), 62–63 (#33). Apart from this, I know of no probing of the Christian counter-questions and -examples in the literature under examination here.

199. *Ibid.*, 60–61 (#32).

crucifixion (by the Jews). These two ways of speaking refer to distinct aspects of *al-ṣalb*: respectively, what the Jews did to Christ, and Christ's salvific endurance of what they did to him. Furthermore, different moral evaluations may be made of these different aspects. The verbal noun (*qatl*, *ṣalb*) *in itself* is morally neutral. But it takes on a moral value when annexed in a genitive construction to a subject or an object.

Now Abū Rā'īṭah is in a position to argue that the Muslim dilemma-question -- "Did His *ṣalb* and *qatl* take place with His approval, or with aversion?"<sup>(200)</sup> -- is insufficiently precise. It ought, in fact, to be resolved into *two* questions, corresponding to the two aspects of the verbal nouns: (i) "Does He approve of what the Jews did to him out of their envy and malicious intentions?"<sup>(201)</sup> to which the answer can only be *ma'āḍa -llāh* (God forbid!);<sup>(202)</sup> and (ii) "Does He approve of what he freely endured at their hands?"<sup>(203)</sup> to which the answer is *balā* (yes indeed!);<sup>(204)</sup>

At this point in the argument Abū Rā'īṭah anticipates the objection that this two-fold answer is contradictory, because "what they did to Him" (*fi'luhum ladayhi*) and "what He endured from them" (*mā -htamalahu minhum*) are one.<sup>(205)</sup> For Abū Rā'īṭah, to refuse the distinction between the action of the *qātil* ("killer") and the endurance of the *maqtūl* ("one killed") is to collapse the distinction between subject and object, between the active and the passive voices: "the killer becomes the killed, and the killed the killer."<sup>(206)</sup> Just how ridiculous this is can be seen by applying such illogic to the case of the (Muslim) martyr (*ṣahīd*) and his (infidel) killer. If the action of the *qātil* and the endurance of the *maqtūl* are one, then "the martyr is a killer and the killer a martyr, and each is blameworthy and praiseworthy, . . . blameworthy because of the killing and praiseworthy because of the martyrdom."<sup>(207)</sup>

Exploiting the resources of Arabic grammatical analysis, Abū Rā'īṭah has found a specifically *Arabic* way of affirming the possibility of a double judgement with respect to the crucifixion of Christ: approval and willingness with respect to the salvific endurance of crucifixion, and wrath and aversion with respect to the action of the crucifiers. With this, one horn of the dilemma is sawed off: Christ was willing to undergo crucifixion, but this does not remove the negative judgement on the action of his crucifiers. The remaining horn -- that the occurrence of the crucifixion despite this negative judgment implies weakness, a victory of creatures over the Creator -- may be dealt with by means of any of the counter-questions of the first

200. يرضى كان صلبه وقتله، أم بكره منه؟ ibid., 61/7.

201. هو راض بما أتى إليه من اليهود لحسدهم وخبث نياتهم؟ ibid., 61/8-9.

202. Ibid., 61/9.

203. راض هو بما احتمل منهم غير مكره عليه؟ ibid., 61/11.

204. Ibid.

205. Ibid., 61/14-15; note Graf's emendation of the text.

206. صار القاتل مقتولاً والمقتول قاتلاً . . . ; ibid., 61/17-18.

207. فالشهيد قاتل والقاتل شهيد، وكلّ مذموم وممدوح، القاتل والمقتول، مذموم عن القتل وممدوح على الاستشهاد. ibid., 62/1-2.

type studied above. Thus Abū Rā'īṭah concludes his argument with the questions: Is it with approval or aversion that God regards the martyrdom of the martyrs (*ṣuhadā'*), or the blasphemy (*iftirā'*) of the blasphemers?(208) Acts of rebellion such as blasphemy do *not* prove God weak or do Him any harm, but their perpetrators are culpable all the same.(209)

(c) *What of the agony in Gethsemane, or the cry of dereliction?*

Those Muslims who wrote refutations of the Christians seldom fail to mention Christ's agony in the garden of Gethsemane, or the cry of dereliction from the cross ("My God, my God, why have you forsaken me") as evidence that Christ was *not* God, and that Christians themselves portray him as weak, compelled to a fate that he did *not* will. In the lists of Christ's human activities with which Muslim controversialists countered the Christian affirmation of Christ's divinity,(210) *ḥāfa* ("he feared") and *istaḡāṭa* ("he called for help") are regular members.

A number of responses were available to Christian apologists. One response, of course, was that fear of pain and death is simply part of the human condition that Christ freely accepted, "and proved thereby that his Incarnation was a *true* incarnation." (211) With respect to the cry of dereliction from the cross, the author of *al-Ġāmi'* has yet another explanation. Christ did not speak for himself, but for humanity, estranged from God. He was like a king's son who dressed himself in rags and interceded for the king's rebellious people, saying, "Lord, how long will you avert your face from me?" (212)

A more surprising response is found in the writings of the Jacobites Abū Rā'īṭah and Eustathius, who deal with the question within the dialectic set up by the double affirmation of Christ's freedom and the Jews' guilt.(213) Far from casting doubt on Christ's free acceptance of suffering and death for humanity's salvation, his fear and calling for help serve (in Abū Rā'īṭah's words) "to establish his complaint against Satan and the Jews, lest they excuse themselves from the blame of what they committed in killing him, saying, 'We are blameless in what we did, because we only

208. Ibid., 62 (end of #32).

209. Ibid., 62–62 (#33).

210. See below, pp. 238–46.

211. واستدلّ بذلك أنّ تجسّده تجسّد حقّ; from Abū Rā'īṭah's "On the Incarnation," GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭa* (1951), 59/1–7 (citation from line 5). Cf. the passages from *al-Ġāmi' wuḡūh al-īmān* cited or referred to above, pp. 186–87.

212. «يا سيّدي، إلى متى تصرف بوجهك عني؟» in Chapter 17, Question 11, BL or. 4950, ff. 102<sup>v</sup>–103<sup>v</sup> (citation from f. 103<sup>r</sup>/4–5).

213. Abū Rā'īṭah, "On the Incarnation," GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭah* (1951), 59–60 (#31). Eustathius, Mingana chr. ar. 52, f. 51<sup>r</sup>.

did it with his approval!"<sup>(214)</sup> Christ's public cry of dereliction makes any such excuse empty, since a crowd of witnesses became aware of Christ's aversion to the fate brought upon him.

Abū Rā'iṭah immediately goes on to show from the New Testament that Christ was indeed willing to undergo crucifixion and death. At this point in the argument his language is rather paradoxical, but he soon resolves the paradox with his grammatical analysis of *qatl* and *ṣalb*. The double judgment authorized by that analysis means that one can simultaneously say that Christ was averse to the Jews' action in crucifying him (which establishes their guilt) *and* that Christ foresaw and willingly underwent crucifixion (in accordance with his freedom). There is, therefore, no contradiction between Christ's freedom and his fear, between his control of events and his cry for help.

#### IV. Redemption from the Curse of the Law

##### A. "On the Necessity of Redemption": The Argument

Unique in the literature examined in the present study is a little treatise by Theodore Abū Qurrah which I call "On the Necessity of Redemption."<sup>(215)</sup> It is the first in a set of three linked apologetic pieces specifically designed to explain to *Muslims* the Christian doctrines of redemption, Incarnation, and the divinity of the Son of God.<sup>(216)</sup> The argument that Abū Qurrah makes is summed up by the full title of the work, as given in the edition of Constantine Bacha: "A treatise concerning the fact that no one is forgiven his sin except through the pains of Christ, which came upon him for the sake of the people; and that whoever does not believe in these pains and offer them to the Father for his trespasses will never have forgiveness of his trespasses."<sup>(217)</sup>

214. . . . قوام حجّته على الشيطان واليهود، فلئلا يعذروا أنفسهم فيما ارتكبوه من الذنب في قتله، ولئلا يقولوا «إنّه لا ذنب لنا فيما صنعنا، لأنّا إنّما فعلنا ذلك برضا منه!» GRAF, *Abū Rā'iṭah* (1951), 59/7–10. Eustathius simply says: . . . لإيجاب الحجّة عليهم، أظهر الجزع والاستغاثة وما أشبه ذلك ("in order to make the argument against them compelling, he manifested fear, cries for help, and similar things"), Mingana chr. ar. 52, f. 50<sup>v</sup>.

215. Ed. BACHA, *Mayāmir* (1904), 83–91 [GT GRAF, *Abū Qurra* (1910), 169–77]. Earlier discussions of this treatise include RIVIÈRE, "Précurseur" (1914); GRIFFITH, *Theology* (1978), 193–98; and SWANSON, "Cross" (1994), 121–23.

216. The other treatises are "On the Possibility of the Incarnation" (BACHA, *Mayāmir* (1904), 180–86) and "On the Divinity of the Son" (ibid., 91–104). For the full titles of these works and bibliographical information, see above, p. 11.

217. ميمر في أنّه لا يغفر لأحد خطيئته إلّا بأوجاع المسيح، التي حلّت به في شأن الناس؛ وأنّ من لا يؤمن بهذه الأوجاع ويقربها للآب عن ذنوبه فلا مغفرة لذنوبه أبداً; ibid., 83/1–3.

Clearly, Abū Qurrah is taking a different apologetic tack than those Christian theologians studied earlier in this chapter. While he can talk easily of Satan and his defeat, especially when addressing Christians,<sup>(218)</sup> in "On the Necessity of Redemption" we encounter the same sort of "demythologization" that we noted earlier with regard to the apologetic soteriology of Abū Rā'īṭah.<sup>(219)</sup> To describe humankind's fallen state, Abū Qurrah does not tell the story of their fall under *Satan's* authority, but rather says that "Adam and his children had rushed headlong into a collision with sin, and destruction had gained mastery over them,"<sup>(220)</sup> His apology is therefore fundamentally *not* a redescription of the story of Jesus as his deceptive defeat of the Devil, even if he alludes to that story in passing.<sup>(221)</sup> Nor is the apology a redescription of the story of Jesus as a divine demonstration of the reality of the resurrection of the dead. In fact, "On the Necessity of Redemption" simply presupposes the reality of the life of the world to come -- in blessedness or in torment -- as a shared biblical and Qur'ānic truth. As for the resurrection of Christ, it hardly plays any role in the apology at all.

The common ground upon which Abū Qurrah constructs the argument of "On the Necessity of Redemption," in addition to the expectation of the future life, is the fact that *God has revealed His Law, demands perfect obedience, and punishes disobedience*. Thus the treatise begins:<sup>(222)</sup>

إِنَّ اللَّهَ أَنْزَلَ النَّامُوسَ عَلَى مُوسَى بِطُورِ سَيْنَا،  
وافترض فيه على الناس فرائض،  
ووضع حدوداً على مَنْ عداها.  
فكان من فريضة الله هناك أن يحبه  
بكلِّ قلوبهم  
وبكلِّ قوتهم  
وبكلِّ نفوسهم  
وبكلِّ نياتهم.

218. See above, pp. 159 (note 27), 162–63, and below, pp. 224–25, 228.

219. See above, pp. 174–75.

220. . . . آدم وبنيه قد تهوَّروا في الخطيئة والتطموا فيها، واستحوذ عليهم الهلاك 87/12–13. Cf. ibid. 84/6–7: خَيْثَ أَعْبَجْتِكَ ("the habit of sin to which you have voluntarily become subdued has taken root in you, inasmuch as its delight pleased you").

221. E.g., see above, p. 159 (note 27).

222. BACHA, *Mayāmir* (1904), 83/4–6.

## TRANSLATION:

God sent down (*anzala*) the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai,  
 and in it enjoined precepts upon the people  
 and set punishments for the one who neglects them.  
 Among God's precepts there was that they should love him  
 with *all* their hearts  
 and with *all* their strength  
 and with *all* their souls  
 and with *all* their intentions [Deuteronomy 6:5].

God's demand, continues Abū Qurrah, is implacable. There is no redress for the person who falls short of the perfection of the obedience of which he is capable. And for the person who fails to obey, there is no escape from the punishment stipulated in the Law.

But now there is an objection. Does not repentance (*tawbah*) avert the punishment stipulated in the Law? Abū Qurrah responds that repentance does not blunt the Law's demand for obedience. Even if a person *did* achieve perfect obedience after repentance, his *former* sins would still demand punishment, as he explains using language resonant with Qur'ānic overtones:<sup>(223)</sup>

فإنه لا سبيل لك أن تمحق  
 - ولو مقدار ذرة! -  
 من خطيئتك السالفة منك.  
 إذاً، لا محالة أن العقوبة التي لحقتك  
 بما قدّمت يداك  
 راتبة عليك.  
 لا تقدر أن تزيلها بشيء!

## TRANSLATION:

There is no way for you to blot out any  
 — not even an atom's measure! —  
 of your former sin.  
 Thus it is inevitable that the punishment that falls to you  
 because of "what your hands have forwarded"  
 will be fixed upon you.  
 You will not be able to remove it at all!

Abū Qurrah's "not even an atom's measure!" (*wa-law miqdār ḍarrah*) echoes the Qur'ān's *miṭqāl ḍarrah* in verses such as *al-Zilzāl* (99):8, وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا ("and whoso has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it," i.e. on the Day of

Judgement). And his expression "what your hands have forwarded" (*bi-mā qaddamat yadāka*) is common to judgement formulae such as *Āl 'Imrān* (3):181-82, where God says to the malefactors: . . . ذوقوا عذاب الحريق. ذلك بما قدّمت أيديكم . . . ("Taste the chastisement of the burning – that, for what your hands have forwarded . . ."). Abū Qurrah's language here carries a clear reminder of the Qur'ān's terrible threats of everlasting punishment.

A further objection comes from one who says, "God charges (*yukallif*) no one of the people to exert his uttermost endeavor in His obedience," which appears to be Abū Qurrah's parody of the Qur'ānic assertion (e.g. in *al-Baqarah* (2):286) لا يكلف الله لا يكلّف الله نفساً إلاّ وسعها ("God charges no soul save to its capacity"). Abū Qurrah dismisses this rather contemptuously by suggesting that its corollary is that God wills that people exert *some* of their strength in obeying Satan -- to which one can only say *ḥāṣā li-llāhi*, God forbid!

But why should not God simply forgive sins freely, in His mercy putting aside those punishments that follow on the Law? Abū Qurrah responds that to bestow such forgiveness without some *sabab 'adl*, some "means for maintaining justice" that would preserve the integrity of the Law, would simply be to make God's Law a vanity (*bāṭil*) and God Himself something frivolous (*'abaṭ*)! Once again the vocabulary is familiar to those who know the Qur'ān, which strongly denies that God has created anything *bāṭilan* (*Āl 'Imrān* (3):191, *Ṣād* (38):27) or *'abaṭan* (*al-Mu'minūn* (23):115.) God does not act vainly or frivolously! But if He were to forgive sins without a *sabab 'adl*, then His mercy would embrace believer and unbeliever alike. There would be no point in suffering obedience; moral chaos would reign. Again, one can only say *ḥāṣā li-llāhi*, God forbid!

What *sabab 'adl* might there then be which would preserve the integrity of God's Law, and yet allow human beings to attain God's favor and remission from the consequences of their trespasses? The answer, according to Abū Qurrah, is the Incarnation and passion of the eternal Son of God:<sup>(224)</sup>

- 1 ونحن نقول إنّ الابن الأزلي،  
المولود من الله قبل كلّ الدهور،  
الذي هو من جوهر الله وعدله،
- 2 هبط من السماء برحمته إلى ذرّة آدم،  
وحلّ في رحم العذراء المطهّرة بروح القدس،  
فاتّخذ منها جسداً جبلة لنفسه بعقل ونفس؛

- 3 وتأنس من روح القدس ومن مريم المطهرة،  
فخرج إلى العالم،  
متعرضاً أن تحلَّ به العقوبة التي كان كل واحد منا استوجبها  
بخطيئة نفسه،  
من الضرب والفضيحة والصلب والقتل.
- 4 لأنه، لو لم يتجسد،  
لما كان لهذه الأوجاع سبيل أن تصل إليه،  
لأنه في جوهره الإلهي لا يرى ولا يجس،  
ولا يصل إليه ألم ولا وجع ولا أذى.
- 5 ولكن حيث تجسد،  
اشترع السبيل إلى هذه الآلام أن تنفذ إليه،  
بأن عرَّض لها جسده.
- 6 وأمكن من ظهره أن يجلد بالسياط،  
ومن رأسه أن يُطرق له عليه،  
ومن وجهه أن يُبصق فيه،  
ومن يديه ورجليه أن تُسمَّر،  
ومن ضلعه أن يُطعن بالحربة.<sup>(1)</sup>
- 7 فتجشَّم هذه الآلام بالحقيقة في جسده  
-- ولم ينفذ منها شيء إلى طبيعته الإلهية --  
وأنجز خلاصنا.

---

(1) Ed. في الحربة.

#### TRANSLATION:

- 1 We say that the eternal Son,  
begotten of God before all ages,  
who is of the essence of God and His equal,
- 2 came down from heaven in his mercy to Adam's descendants,  
and dwelt in the womb of a purified virgin by the Holy Spirit,  
and took from her a body which he fashioned for himself with mind and soul;
- 3 and became incarnate from the Holy Spirit and from Mary the purified one,  
and went out into the world exposed to the punishment coming upon him,  
[the punishment] which every one of us deserved on account of his own sin:  
beating, ignominy, crucifixion, and death.
- 4 If he had not become incarnate these pains would have had no way to attain him,  
because in his divine nature he is invisible and intangible,  
and no suffering or pain or harm attains him.
- 5 But inasmuch as he became incarnate,  
a way was made for these sufferings to reach him  
in that he exposed *his body* to them.

- 6 He made it possible that his back be flogged with a whip,  
that he be smitten upon the head,  
that his face be spat upon,  
that his hands and feet be nailed,  
and that his ribcage be pierced by a spear.
- 7 He truly bore these sufferings in his body  
(although none of them reached his divine nature)  
and accomplished our salvation.

At this point in his presentation, but *only* at this point,<sup>(225)</sup> Abū Qurrah cites several of the usual Old Testament prophecies of the crucifixion – Isaiah 50:5-6 and 53:2-7, Psalm 22:16-18 and Zechariah 12:10 -- concluding that *all* the prophets bore witness to Christ's pains, alone through which human beings are delivered from the torment they have deserved because of their sins. But there remains the question: *how* do Christ's pains accomplish this? In a dramatic little passage, Abū Qurrah "eavesdrops" as God the Father explains the matter to His eternal Son:<sup>(226)</sup>

- 1 لأنك، أيها الابن الطاهر،<sup>(1)</sup>  
عدلي ومن جوهرى.  
2 وليس الخلق كلهم باليقين يعدلونك،  
أو يقاسون بك في حال من الحالات،  
لجلال لاهوتك الذي لا شيء يقرب إليه.  
3 فإذا أصابتك العقوبة  
- المستوجبها كل واحد منهم مراراً لا تُحصى -  
مرة واحدة في شأنهم،  
4 فقد قضيت الناموس عنهم حقّه كله،  
وزدت ما لا نهاية له.

---

(1) Ed. الظاهر.

#### TRANSLATION:

- 1 Because you, pure Son,  
are my equal and of my essence.
- 2 Of a certainty, all the creatures [together] do not equal you  
or are comparable to you in any way at all,  
on account of the majesty of your divinity which nothing approaches.

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225. See p. 126 above.

226. BACHA, *Mayāmir* (1904), 88/2-7. For parallels in Abū Qurrah's "On the Death of Christ," see below, pp. 225-27.

- 3 Therefore if the punishment  
 — which every one of them deserves innumerable times —  
 falls upon you *one time* on their behalf,  
 4 you will have discharged for them  
 the entire claim of the Law,  
 and will have added that which has no end.

And therefore forgiveness of sins and deliverance from punishment is possible  
 -- to those who offer *Christ's* pains to the Father:<sup>(227)</sup>

- 1 فنحن الآن، معشر النصارى،  
 إذ قربنا أوجاع هذا الابن عن خطايانا،  
 2 عُفرت خطايانا<sup>(1)</sup> لا محالة،  
 وسلمنا من العذاب المُعدَّ لِمَن فارق الدنيا  
 بعد مجيء المسيح قبل أن تُغفر ذنوبه بدمه.  
 3 فأما غير النصارى،  
 مِمَّن لا يقرب أوجاع المسيح عن خطيئته،  
 4 فهم يموتون بخطاياهم . . . ،  
 ومَن مات بخطيئته فعذابها لازمٌ له أبداً.

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(1) Ed. خطيانا.

#### TRANSLATION:

- 1 So now we, the community of Christians,  
 when we offered the pains of this Son for our sins,  
 2 our sins were most certainly forgiven,  
 and we escaped from the torment prepared for the one  
 who (since the coming of Christ)<sup>(228)</sup> has departed the world  
 before his trespasses were forgiven through his blood.  
 3 As for the non-Christians,  
 including whoever does not offer the pains of Christ for his sin,  
 4 they die in their sins . . . ,  
 and whoever dies in his sin is inevitably subject to its torment forever.

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227. BACHA, *Mayāmir* (1904), 90/3–8.

228. Abū Qurrah briefly mentions Christ's descent into Hell in order to rescue the righteous people who died *before* his coming at *ibid.*, 89/18–90/2. For more detail see below, p. 228.

## B. "On the Necessity of Redemption" in the History of Doctrine<sup>(229)</sup>

### 1. Abū Qurrah: a precursor of Anselm?

For Western Christian readers, the argument advanced by Theodore Abū Qurrah in "On the Necessity of Redemption" has a familiar ring. This is by no means a new observation. A very few years after Georg Graf had made the treatise known to Western scholars through his German translation,<sup>(230)</sup> Jean Rivi re, the great French Roman Catholic scholar of the doctrine of redemption, published an article entitled "Un pr curseur de Saint Anselme: La th ologie r demptrice de Th odore Ab  Qurra."<sup>(231)</sup> Rivi re presented an impressive array of parallels between the way in which Ab  Qurrah sets out the problem to be solved in "On the Necessity of Redemption" and the way in which it is set out in that defining work of the last nine centuries of Western soteriology, the *Cur Deus homo* of St. Anselm of Canterbury (completed in 1098).<sup>(232)</sup> Ab  Qurrah had begun his treatise with the assertion that God demands perfect obedience to His Law, and punishes disobedience. Three centuries later, Anselm wrote:<sup>(233)</sup>

The will of every rational creature must be subject to the will of God. . . . For only such a will produces works pleasing to God . . . . A person who does not render God this honor due Him, takes from God what is His . . . and this is to commit sin. . . . It is, however, not seemly for God to let pass something inordinate in His kingdom. . . . Hence it is not fitting for God to remit sin without punishing it.

Ab  Qurrah had argued that even if it were possible that repentance bring about obedience, former sins would still demand punishment. Similarly, Anselm has his friend Boso say:<sup>(234)</sup>

If, even when I am not in the state of sin, I owe Him myself and whatever I can do, in order to avoid sinning, I have nothing to offer Him in compensation for [former] sin.

And what of the possibility of free pardon? Anselm's answer repeats several points

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229. In this section I am indebted to Dr. George Bebawi for his critique of my overly "Western" assessment of "On the Necessity of Redemption" in a paper read to the Woodbrooke Symposium (Birmingham, May 1990) and, after revision, published: SWANSON, "Cross" (1994).

230. GRAF, *Ab  Qurra* (1910), 169–77.

231. RIVI RE, "Pr curseur" (1914).

232. These parallels are set out in *ibid.*, 339–44.

233. For these quotations from Anselm I am following Rivi re (*ibid.*), but have checked the edition of Ren  Roques. I reproduce the English translation of Joseph Colleran. For the following text, see *Cur Deus homo* I, 11–12 (ROQUES, *Dieu* (1963), 262–65, 268–69 [ET COLLERAN, *Anselm* (1969), 84–85]).

234. *Cur Deus homo* I, 20 (ROQUES, *Dieu* (1963), 320–21 [ET COLLERAN, *Anselm* (1969), 107]).

that Abū Qurrah had made, and which had led him to exclaim *ḥāšā li-llāhi*, God forbid!<sup>(235)</sup>

[I]f it is not fitting for God to do anything unjustly or inordinately, it does not pertain to His freedom or kindness or will to pardon without punishment a sinner who does not make recompense to God for what he took away.

[I]f an unpunished sin is remitted, one who sins and one who does not sin will be in the same position before God.

But if you wish to say: "The merciful God remits the debt of one who supplicates Him, for the very reason that he cannot repay it," . . . what else would that mean but that God is remitting what He cannot obtain? But to attribute such "mercy" to God would be to deride Him.

Rivière concluded that "the humble bishop of Ḥarrān" can be considered a precursor of "the great doctor of Canterbury" insofar as he posed himself the same question -- sin and the possibility of its forgiveness -- and adopted some of the same premises in answering it.<sup>(236)</sup> Beyond this, however, Rivière saw Abū Qurrah as making the wrong turn at a fork in the road of soteriological truth that leads to Anselm (and beyond to the great scholastics). Anselm himself described this fork in the road: "it is necessary that satisfaction *or* punishment follow every sin."<sup>(237)</sup> Abū Qurrah took the "road" of punishment: Christ submitted himself to the punishment that was rightly ours. For Anselm on the other hand, Christ offered *satisfaction*, which is to be understood as "an homage *substituted for* for the punishment and dispensing with it."<sup>(238)</sup> Therefore, according to Rivière, Abū Qurrah's doctrine may finally be seen to be "miles away" (*aux antipodes*) from that of Anselm.<sup>(239)</sup> It is, however, a "remarkable anticipation" of *Protestant* theories of penal substitution such as those of the Reformed legal theorist Hugo Grotius (1583-1645).<sup>(240)</sup>

## 2. Another comparison

Anselm's *Cur Deus homo* is not the only Christian soteriological "classic" in which parallels to Abū Qurrah's "On the Necessity of Redemption" may be sought. Asking, for the moment, "Of whom is Abū Qurrah the development?" rather than "Of whom is he the precursor?" there is considerable enlightenment to be had by

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235. *Cur Deus homo* I, 12, 24 (ROQUES, *Dieu* (1963), 272–73, 268–69, 336–39 [ET COLLERAN, *Anselm* (1969), 87, 86, 114]).

236. RIVIÈRE, "Précurseur" (1914), 350.

237. *Cur Deus homo* I, 15 (ROQUES, *Dieu* (1963), 280–81 [ET COLLERAN, *Anselm* (1969), 91]). The emphasis is that of RIVIÈRE, "Précurseur" (1914), 344.

238. *Ibid.*, 349. Emphasis mine.

239. *Ibid.*

240. *Ibid.*, 350. On the soteriology of Grotius, see RIVIÈRE, "Rédemption" (1937), 1954.

examining *De Incarnatione* of St. Athanasius of Alexandria (ca. 295-373).<sup>(241)</sup> Athanasius describes the plight from which humankind needed to be redeemed as follows: created originally from nothing, human beings are *by nature* corruptible. However, in their original blessed state they were exempted from this natural corruptibility through their contemplation of and participation in the Creator Word of God. With the fall, however, our first parents turned away from the source of their existence and incorruptibility, and thus they and their descendants began to slip -- and indeed, by becoming insatiable in sinning, to plunge -- back into non-existence and corruption.<sup>(242)</sup>

For Athanasius, therefore, the great problem which humanity faces is not (as in Abū Qurrah) the punishment due because of offences against the (Mosaic) Law, but *death*, which ever since it was activated by our first parents' transgression of God's commandment has been like an "engine of destruction" bearing down inexorably on the entire human race.<sup>(243)</sup> What can be done about this? Like Abū Qurrah after him, Athanasius does not doubt that the integrity of God's commandment and Law must be upheld:<sup>(244)</sup>

[B]y the law death thenceforth prevailed over us. And it was impossible to flee the law, since this had been established by God because of the transgression. And these events were truly at once absurd (ἄτοπος) and improper (ἄπρεπής). For it was absurd that, having spoken, God should lie, in that he had established a law that man would die by death if he were to transgress the commandment, and man did not die after he had transgressed, but God's word was made void (λύεσθαι τὸν τούτου λόγον). . . . And furthermore, it would have been improper that what had once been created rational and had partaken of his Word, should perish and return again to non-existence through corruption.

As Abū Qurrah put it later in Qur'ānicly colored language, God forbid that God's Law should become *bāṭil* ("void"), or that He Himself should be '*abat*\_, creating and speaking frivolously!<sup>(245)</sup>

Athanasius asks about the possibility of *repentance*, and -- like Abū Qurrah later -- concludes that repentance is insufficient to undo the *consequence* of sin (which for Athanasius is *corruption*, whereas for Abū Qurrah it is *punishment*).<sup>(246)</sup>

The solution, according to Athanasius, is the Incarnation, passion, and resurrection of God the Word. The Creator Word rescues his creatures by

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241. Ed. and ET: THOMSON, *Athanasius* (1971).

242. *De Inc.* 3–5 (THOMSON, *Athanasius* (1971), 138–47).

243. I am indebted to Prof. David Yeago of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary (Columbia, South Carolina) this image, and, more fundamentally, for the suggestion that I look carefully at Athanasius' *De Incarnatione* as possible background for understanding Abū Qurrah's doctrine of redemption.

244. *De Inc.* 6 (THOMSON, *Athanasius* (1971), 146–49; his ET).

245. See above, p. 214.

246. *De Inc.* 7 (THOMSON, *Athanasius* (1971), 150–51).

*interposing* his own body between them and the "engine of destruction" which is death. Since this body is *the body of the Word*, death and corruption exhaust themselves in it; and with Christ's resurrection the way is opened for Adam's descendants to return to incorruptibility, immortality, and re-creation in the image of the Father.<sup>(247)</sup>

This has quite a different sound to what we have heard in Abū Qurrah's "On the Necessity of Redemption." If, however, we take Athanasius' dramatic vision of redemption and make the "engine of destruction" that bears down upon humanity *inevitable punishment for transgressions of the Law of God* rather than *inevitable death and corruption for turning away from the Word of God*, then in essentials we have the story told by Abū Qurrah! For we can summarize the argument of "On the Necessity of Redemption" perfectly well by saying that the eternal Son rescues human beings by "interposing" himself between them and the punishments which are "bearing down" on them, "exhausting" the claims of the Law for punishment because of the majesty of his divinity.

The fundamental congruity between the plots of the narratives of redemption told by Athanasius and Abū Qurrah may be made very plain through a comparison of summary passages. Athanasius had summarized the Word's redemptive work as the offering of his body – *to death*:<sup>(248)</sup>

Therefore as an offering and sacrifice free of all spot,  
     he offered to death the body which he had taken to himself,  
     and immediately abolished death from all who were like him  
     by the offering of a like.  
 For since the Word is above all,  
     consequently by offering his temple and the instrument of his body  
     as a substitute for all men,  
     he fulfilled the debt by his death.

As for Abū Qurrah, he would later make precisely the same points while speaking of the work of the incarnate Son as a purchase – *from the curse of the Law*:<sup>(249)</sup>

After that he purchased us people from the curse of the Law  
     by his pains and crucifixion and death.  
 What he endured of that became the settlement of what had been incumbent  
     upon every one who believed in him.  
 In him is sufficiency to settle this for all of us  
     because he is an eternal Son,  
     better than us all without compare.

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247. *De Inc.* 8–10 (THOMSON, *Athanasius* (1971), 150–59).

248. *De Inc.* 9 (THOMSON, *Athanasius* (1971), 154–55; his ET).

249. In "On the Death of Christ." For the Arabic text, see below, p. 225.

Simply stated, Abū Qurrah's apologetic soteriology is structurally that of Athanasius, but with "death" replaced by "the curse of the Law."<sup>(250)</sup>

### 3. Abū Qurrah between Athanasius and Anselm

In terms of plot, the soteriological redescription of the story of Jesus that we find in Theodore Abū Qurrah's "On the Necessity of Redemption" fits perfectly into the tradition represented by Athanasius' *De Incarnatione*. The original features in Abū Qurrah's presentation are due largely to the fact that it is an *apologetic* soteriology directed to *Muslims*. Abū Qurrah appears to have decided that neither the biblical story of the Fall, nor an ontology such as that of Athanasius, would do for describing plausibly *within the Islamic environment* the plight of humanity from which Christ achieved salvation. However, Muslims could certainly agree with Christians on the sending down of the Law to Moses, the divine expectation of obedience, the final judgement when "whoso has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it,"<sup>(251)</sup> and the reality of "the burning . . . for what your hands have forwarded."<sup>(252)</sup> Therefore Abū Qurrah defined the plight from which humankind was saved by the Incarnation and passion of Christ not in terms of death, nor (in his writing directed *to Muslims*) in terms of the Devil, but in terms of "the curse of the Law and damnation."<sup>(253)</sup>

It is true that Abū Qurrah's "On the Necessity of Redemption" bears some remarkable similarities to Anselm's *Cur Deus homo*. The reason for this should not be seen, however, in the groping of "the humble bishop of Hārārān" towards true soteriological doctrine, but rather in terms of an *apologetic program common to the two theologians*. For, as Julia Gauss has brilliantly shown in her historical, biographical, and textual studies of Anselm, *Cur Deus homo* was written on the eve of the Crusades to serve the Western Church *in its confrontation with Islam* (and

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250. Parallels to the passage just cited may be found elsewhere in Abū Qurrah's works. For example, in "On the Possibility of the Incarnation" we find (ibid., 182/17–19): *حلّ في الجسد الذي أخذه من مريم العذراء المطهرة، وعرضه إلى الآلام والأوجاع التي كانت، إذا حلّت به، فداننا بذلك من لعنة الناموس* ([The eternal Son] dwelt in the body which he took from Mary the pure virgin, and exposed it to the sufferings and pains which were, when they came upon it, our redemption from the curse of the Law). Also see note 253 below.

251. *al-Zilzāl* (99):8. See above, pp. 213–14.

252. *Āl 'Imrān* (3):181–82. See above, pp. 213–14.

253. We recall that the title of the little compilation of "Abū Qurrah" material preserved as his *opusculum* 1 (PG 97, 1461–70) is "The Five Enemies from which the Savior Delivered Us," which are death, the Devil, the curse of the Law and damnation, sin, and hell. It comes as no surprise that the main parallels to Abū Qurrah's Arabic "On the Necessity of Redemption" are found in the third part, on "the curse of the Law and damnation" (ibid., 1467–70).

Judaism).<sup>(254)</sup> The much-discussed "rationalism" of Anselm is, as Gauss points out, *apologetically-determined* "rationalism."<sup>(255)</sup> Anselm argues "as if nothing were known about Christ"<sup>(256)</sup> because he intends to build his apology on presuppositions common to Christians, Muslims, and Jews: creation, sin, reward and punishment in the life to come.<sup>(257)</sup> But this, we have seen, is precisely Abū Qurrah's program in "On the Necessity of Redemption." And thus there is a very fundamental sense in which "the humble bishop of Ḥarrān" can indeed be said to be a precursor of "the great doctor of Canterbury."

## V. Discussion in Conclusion and Anticipation

A few final observations will suffice to bring the present chapter to a close and to set the stage for the next chapter, while allowing us a glance at a few additional passages of interest from the writings of Theodore Abū Qurrah.

### (a) *The various stories: complementarity or confusion?*

The Christian apologists we have studied did not consider their different narrative redescriptions of the story of Jesus to be mutually exclusive. In keeping with those Church Fathers who could pile up redemptive images and metaphors in single paragraphs without any sense of unclarity or contradiction,<sup>(258)</sup> arabophone apologists could and did employ a variety of ways of telling the story of Jesus as the story of redemption. This is certainly the case, for example, in the work of Theodore Abū Qurrah, who could easily speak about Christ's deception and defeat of Satan in certain contexts and about Christ's redeeming us from the curse of the Law in others. In one remarkable passage in "On the Death of Christ," a polemic directed

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254. GAUSS, "Islamfrage" (1963) and "Begegnung" (1967). I have not seen a copy of her "Die Auseinandersetzung mit Judentum und Islam bei Anselm," in *Analecta Anselmiana* 4/2 (1975).

255. GAUSS, "Islamfrage" (1963), 269–72.

256. *Cur Deus homo* Praef. (ROQUES, *Dieu* (1963), 198–99 [ET COLLERAN, *Anselm* (1969), 60]).

257. It may be worth commenting that the similarities that Rivière claimed to see between Abū Qurrah's doctrine and that of Grotius could be examined in the same light. Grotius, after all, developed his soteriology in opposition to rationalist Socinians. He too had to argue "as if nothing" supernatural "were known about Christ."

258. E.g. see above, p. 167 (note 50). An excellent study of the predilection of Cyril of Alexandria for "clusters" of brief, unexplained soteriological assertions is McINERNEY, "Commonplaces" (1979).

to *Christians*, he describes Christ's struggle with and victory over Satan in terms now very familiar to us:<sup>(259)</sup>

- 1 من أجل ذلك حصر الابن الأزلي<sup>(1)</sup> قوته إلى قدر الطبيعة الإنسانية بالعدل،  
وأخذ حقيقتها من روح القدس ومن مريم العذراء.
- 2 فخرج من العذراء،  
ومشي في العالم متعرضاً للشيطان.
- 3 فأقدم الشيطان على أن صارعه بكل وجه من الصراع الذي صارعه به آدم  
(كما سمعتم في الإنجيل أنه فعل به في البرية)،
- 4 فأكَبَّ عليه مع ذلك الأوجاع المذكورة في الإنجيل،  
فلم يقدر أن يصرعه ولا يزلّه . . . .
- 5 فزكى الطبيعة الإنسانية،  
وأزال العار عنها.
- 6 وفضح الشيطان الذي كان يعيرها،  
وقمع استطالته التي كان عليها،  
وجعل الشيطان متهوراً بالجهل عند الملائكة والخلق كلها،
- 7 بعد أن كان يفتخر بحكمته وخبثه، ويقول:  
«إني استعبدتُ صورة الله،  
وذلتُ لي الخليفة كلها في سببها».

(1) Ed. الازل.

#### TRANSLATION:

- 1 Therefore the eternal Son restricted his power, in justice,  
to the measure of human nature,  
and took on its reality from the Holy Spirit and from the Virgin Mary.
- 2 He came out from the Virgin  
and walked in the world, exposed to Satan.
- 3 And Satan made bold to wrestle with him  
in every way in which he had wrestled with Adam  
(as you have heard that he did with him in the wilderness),
- 4 and in addition to that poured out upon him the pains mentioned in the gospels,  
but he was unable to throw him down or cause him to stumble.
- 5 He purified human nature,  
and did away with its shame.
- 6 He exposed Satan, who used to revile it,  
and curbed the arrogance with which he had lorded over it,  
and made Satan to plunge into ignorance before the angels and all the creation,

- 7 and that after he had boasted of his craft and malice, saying:  
 "I have enslaved the image of God,  
 and for that reason the entire creation has submitted itself to me."

But almost immediately after this Abū Qurrah switches to the language of "On the Necessity of Redemption," and explains:<sup>(260)</sup>

- 1 واشترانا نحن الناس بعد ذلك  
 بأوجاعه وصلبه وموته  
 من لعنة الناموس.  
 2 وصار ما لقي من ذلك قضاء  
 لما كان يجب منه على كل من آمن به؛  
 3 وبه كفاية أن يقضي عن كلنا،  
 لأنه ابن أزلي،  
 خير من كلنا بلا قياس.

TRANSLATION:

- 1 After that he purchased us human beings  
 from the curse of the Law  
 by his pains and crucifixion and death.  
 2 What he endured of that became the settlement  
 of what had been incumbent upon every one who believed in him.  
 3 In him is sufficiency to settle this for all of us  
 because he is an eternal Son,  
 better than us all without compare.

When we studied redescriptions of the story of Jesus as that of his cunning deception and defeat of Satan, we noted that by and large they failed to answer the question of *how* precisely the crucifixion fit into the plot. Abū Qurrah appears to have been content to answer the puzzlements of the one story by switching to *another* story into which the crucifixion is more fully integrated: that of Christ's redeeming us from the curse of the Law by undergoing the punishments stipulated by the Law in our stead. In making this observation, we may note once again just how accurate the Muslim al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm was in his summary of Christian soteriological doctrine when he made a sudden switch from the language of deception to that of purchase.<sup>(261)</sup> We may also sense how inevitable it was both that the Christian story of Christ's cunning deception and defeat of Satan should have come in for ferocious critique from Muslim polemicists, and that some Christian writers should have sought ways of pushing that story far into the background of their specifically *Muslim*-directed apologetics.

260. Ibid., 68/13–16. We have already encountered this text; see above, p. 221.

261. See pp. 163–66 (especially at #15) above.

(b) *The inevitable reality of the crucifixion*

Whatever story of redemption a Christian apologist chose to tell, that story amounted to an indirect defence of the historicity of the crucifixion of Christ. For without that crucifixion, Satan would not have been defeated, *or* we would be left without the certainty of the general resurrection and the life of the world to come, *or* we would be left in our sins without the possibility of forgiveness, eternal punishment our only future expectation. To any of these points the only (Arabic) Christian response could be -- to use the expression used so freely by Abū Qurrah in "On the Necessity of Redemption" -- *ḥāšā li-llāhi*, God forbid! If Muslims had argued that it was not fitting for God to allow His honored apostle to undergo the ignominious death of crucifixion,<sup>(262)</sup> Christians responded, in effect, that it was not fitting for God to do otherwise -- since there would then be no salvation (however that salvation was narrated and understood).

(c) *The identity of the one who was crucified*

Generally speaking, for the apologetic soteriologies we have encountered in this chapter the *true divinity of the one who was crucified* is an essential element of the plot. Christ's true (but hidden) divinity is obviously central to the redescription of his story as his cunning victory over Satan, who seized on the "bait" of the humanity and was caught on the "fishhook" of the divinity.<sup>(263)</sup> While the "divine demonstration" soteriology does not require that Jesus Christ be unequivocally identified as "God" -- a fact which perhaps accounts for its popularity among *Nestorian* apologists such as the catholicos Timothy and 'Ammār al-Baṣrī<sup>(264)</sup> -- the absolute *freedom* with which Christ underwent his passion and managed its details (according to "divine demonstration" redescriptions of his story) derives from and points to his true divinity. And to Theodore Abū Qurrah it is abundantly clear that there is no salvation unless the one who suffered and died was *God*. He argues with passion against Nestorians that the death of a mere *man* cannot be salvific:<sup>(265)</sup>

1 إن كان الله إنما أسلم هذا الإنسان للموت لإقامة عدله،  
ولئلا يكون عبثاً وناموسه باطلاً،  
(حيث يكون افترضه على الناس ولا يستوفي حقوقه،)

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262. See above, pp. 145–46.

263. See above, pp. 158–59.

264. See above, p. 176 and pp. 177–79, 182–85, 188–90 respectively. On Nestorian christological scruples, see below, pp. 247–49.

265. From "On the Death of Christ," BACHA, *Mayāmir* (1904), 51/14–52/2.

- 2 بل لا يغفر لأحد خطيئته،  
 حتّى يتقاضى منه كلّ عقوبة لزمته من حدود الناموس؛
- 3 فإنّ هذا ليس من العدل،  
 إذ يكون واجباً لله على كلّ واحد من الناس  
 أن يفضح وأن يُجلد ويُصلب ويُقتل  
 ويحلّ به كلّ نوع من العقوبات المحدودة في الناموس  
 على الخطايا مراراً لا تُعدّ.
- 4 ثمّ لا يسلّم كلّ من آمن بموت المسيح من هذا كلّهُ  
 بتجشّم المسيح إيّاه عنه مرّة واحدة  
 إذا كان المتجشّم إنساناً صرفاً،
- 5 لأنّ هذا الإنسان ليس عدلاً لكنّا  
 حتّى تكون أوجاعه عوضاً للناموس  
 عن عقوبات كلّنا الّتي تجب لله علينا.

## TRANSLATION:

- 1 If God delivered only this man to death in order to establish His justice  
 and in order that He not be frivolity, and His Law void  
 (in that He would have imposed it upon the people  
 and not claimed His rights by it),
- 2 and yet did not forgive sin to anyone,  
 so that He demanded from each one  
 every punishment stipulated by the statutes of the Law;
- 3 this would not be just,  
 since [in this case] every person would be liable before God  
 to be exposed, whipped, crucified, killed,  
 and subjected to every type of punishment specified by the Law for sins,  
 and that countless times.
- 4 Furthermore, everyone who believed in the death of Christ  
 would *not* be delivered from all of this [punishment]  
 by Christ's taking it upon himself *one* time  
 if the one who took it upon himself were a mere man,
- 5 because that man would not be equal to *all* of us  
 so that his pains would be compensation to the Law  
 for the punishments to which all of are liable before God.

And against Severan Monophysites (whom he suspects of having made Christ into something *other* than either God or man),<sup>(266)</sup> Abū Qurrah asks with regard to Christ's sufferings: "if these things are not attributed to *God* (in the manner we have mentioned), by what manner of justice or by what argument have we been saved

266. See p. 255 (note 107) below.

from the Devil, death, sin, and the Law?"<sup>(267)</sup> He goes on:<sup>(268)</sup>

- 1 فليسكت أهل هذا الرأي،  
فإنهم عن الشيطان يخاصمون!
- 2 فقد كان (لعمرى!) يتمنى أن يكون الذي صُلب على الجلجلة ليس بإله  
(وإن كان الإله متصلاً به).
- 3 فإذا هو قد استراح من الخزي بالعز،  
وثبت سلطانه،  
وثوى يصرح على الأمم بصك الخطيئة الذي كتبه آدم أبونا؛
- 4 وكان يحرز أجناد الأنفس تحت يديه في مُطَبَّق الجحيم،  
والأجساد كانت تغرق حتى لا يكون إلا الفساد الكامل الذي حلّ بها؛
- 5 والبر لم يكن يشرق رأساً في أولاد آدم.

#### TRANSLATION:

- 1 So let the people who hold this opinion be silent,  
for they are disputing on behalf of Satan!
- 2 For he (by my life!) had desired that that one who was crucified on Golgotha  
not be God  
(even if God were joined with him).
- 3 For in that case he would have had sure rest from his shame,  
would have consolidated his authority,  
and would have abided, making manifest to the nations  
the bond of sin which our father Adam wrote,
- 4 and would be guarding the host of souls under his hand in the dungeon of Hell,  
and the bodies would have been immersed until there was nothing  
but the complete corruption which had come upon them,
- 5 and righteousness would not have shone at all among the children of Adam.

For the Melkite Abū Qurrah, it is *necessary* to say that the one who died on the cross was *God*. The controversy that such affirmations aroused will be the theme of the next chapter.

267. . . . إن كانت هذه BACHA, *Mayāmir* (1904), 137/11-13: From "The Letter to David the Jacobite,"  
الأشياء لا تنسب إلى الإله (في الوجه الذي ذكرنا)، بأي نحو من العدل أو بآية حجة خلصنا من إبليس  
والموت والخطيئة والناموس؟

268. Ibid., lines 14-19.

## Chapter Five

### THE CRUCIFIXION OF "MY LORD AND MY GOD"

#### I. ". . . *God . . . died*": Paradox or Blasphemy?

##### A. The "Paradox Christology": From the New Testament to Nicaea<sup>(1)</sup>

From the earliest strata of the New Testament witness we find forms of discourse about Jesus of Nazareth, confessed by his followers as the Messiah or "Christ" of Israel, that present extremely peculiar features. On the one hand, his human birth, life, suffering and death are narrated, summarily in some of the traditional materials preserved in the epistles (e.g. Gal. 4:4, 1 Cor. 15:3-4, Rom. 4:25, 1 Pet. 2:21-24, etc.) and more fully in the materials that went into the making of the gospels. But on the other hand, and equally early in the history of the New Testament tradition, divine titles are predicated of Jesus: the primitive Christian confession "Jesus is Lord" (1 Cor. 12:3, Rom. 10:9, Phil. 2:11, etc.) is the earliest example, although later (and perhaps already in Rom. 9:5) Jesus is called "God." Furthermore, in much early New Testament discourse there is a semantic pairing, at times approaching interchangeability, between "Jesus Christ" and "God." In St. Paul, as Robert Jenson has pointed out,<sup>(2)</sup>

the standard Hebrew theological predicates take either God or Jesus as subject, or both at once: for example, "grace" is interchangeably "of God" (Rom. 5:15) or "of Christ" (Rom. 16:20) or bestowed "from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 1:7). Parallel constructions have "God" in one part and "Christ" in the other: "So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us" (2 Cor. 5:20). For Paul, *God* will rule his kingdom, Jesus is *Lord*, and these two circumstances are one fact only: "For the kingdom of God [means] righteousness and peace . . . ; he who thus serves Christ is acceptable" (Rom. 14:17-18, e.g.). Christ simply *is* "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24), the manifestation of that "righteousness" in which Judaism summed up the godliness of God (Rom. 3:21-22).

Such examples may be multiplied, and all go to show that St. John's report of the confession of Thomas before the crucified and risen but palpable Christ, "My Lord

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1. In the following section I am greatly indebted to Professor Robert W. Jenson, especially for a course of lectures in the fall of 1980 in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and for his book *The Triune Identity* (JENSON, *Identity* (1984)), in particular Chapters 2 and 3.
  2. JENSON, *Identity* (1984), 41.

and my God," is not at all foreign to what we might call the grammar of New Testament discourse. In this discourse, as in the Church's subsequent language of prayer, proclamation, and instruction, we find that attributes, activities, and titles proper to human beings *and* attributes, activities, and titles proper to God may be predicated of a single subject, Jesus Christ.

For the religious imagination formed exclusively by the Hebrew scriptures, this odd talk about Jesus would have posed no fundamental *conceptual* difficulty, whatever its challenges of content and claim. For the Hebrew scriptures, after all, human history is the arena in which God performs His mighty works; the interaction and intersection of the divine and the human in time is the stuff of their narrative. With the conversion to the Gospel of persons whose religious imaginations had been molded by *Hellenism*, however, the double human/divine predication of the one subject, Jesus Christ, became far more problematic. Late Hellenism's Deity is typically described as that which is *beyond* time and *immune* to change: ἀγέννητος ("unoriginate"), ἀπαθής ("impassible"), ἄχρονος ("atemporal"), ἀόρατος ("invisible"), ἀψηλάφητος ("impalpable").<sup>(3)</sup> But these attributes are the precise *opposites* of those that describe human existence, and, in particular, those that emerge from the story of Jesus of Nazareth, born when Quirinius was governor of Syria and crucified under Pontius Pilate. When Hellenists-become-Christians came to speak of Christ, they used *both* the divine attributes provided by Hellenism's commonplaces about divinity *and* the human attributes provided by the biblical narrative to produce astonishing formulations such as the following confession of St. Ignatius of Antioch (d. 117 at the latest):<sup>(4)</sup>

There is one physician:	
carnal	and spiritual,
born	and unoriginate,
come-in--flesh	God,
in death	the true life,
of Mary	and of God,
first passible	and then impassible,
Jesus Christ our Lord.	

Similarly, Melito of Sardis (d. before 190) has creation witnessing the "Lord hanging on a tree" and saying:<sup>(5)</sup>

3. The list is that of CAMELOT, *Ignace* (1969), 28.

4. *Ephesians* VII, 2; ET made from Greek text in CAMELOT, *Ignace* (1969), 64. For a discussion of the text see *ibid.*, 27.

5. From Melito's *Fragment 13*. The ET is that of HALL, *Melito* (1979), 80–81. A reconstructed Greek text is offered by RICHARD, "Méliton" (1972), 316–17.

"What can this strange mystery be?

The judge	is judged,	and is silent;
the invisible	is seen,	and is not ashamed;
the incomprehensible	is seized,	and is not vexed;
the immeasurable	is measured,	and does not resist;
the impassible	suffers,	and does not retaliate;
the immortal	dies,	and takes it patiently;
the heavenly one	is buried,	and submits.

What is this strange mystery?"

Elsewhere, Melito says of Christ:<sup>(6)</sup>

He was . . . carried in the womb by Mary,	and clothed with his Father;
treading the earth,	and filling heaven . . . ;
wanting food . . . ,	and not ceasing to nourish the world . . . .
He stood before Pilate,	and sat with the Father;
He was fastened to the tree,	and held the universe.

Robert Jenson has called this manner of speaking about Christ, in which attributes derived from the common-sense Hellenistic understanding of God are paired with Christ's human attributes and/or items from his story, the "paradox christology."<sup>(7)</sup> No synthesis is attempted, rather, the paradoxes involved in the Incarnation of God are allowed to stand -- nay, are painstakingly formulated and positively *celebrated* as the mystery of salvation in which faith (though not Hellenistic religious common sense!) may delight.

That such teaching should cause offence was but natural. Already St. Paul knew from hard experience that the preaching of the crucifixion of Christ -- the "Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:8) -- was "a stumbling-block to Jews and folly to Gentiles" (1 Cor. 1:23). However, most dangerous to the teaching of what became acknowledged as "orthodox" Christian belief were not charges of absurdity from outside the Christian community, but rather the attempts of some *within* the broad community of followers of Christ to mitigate the paradoxes. These attempts often took the form of denying that one or the other set of attributes held together by the "paradox christology" was *really* predicable of the one subject Jesus Christ. Perhaps the human attributes could not really be predicated of Christ (as in some Gnostic systems), or perhaps the attributes of divinity were not fully appropriate for describing him (as in Arianism).

As it happened, that which became "orthodox" Christianity refused the mitigation of the paradox, as can immediately be seen from the second article of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed. The "one Lord Jesus Christ" in whom Christians believe is first described as "the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things were

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6. From *Fragment 14*. Again, the ET is that of HALL, *Melito* (1979), 81–82.

7. JENSON, *Identity* (1984), p. 63.

made." But afterwards the same subject is described as one "who . . . was incarnate . . . from the virgin Mary and became man, and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried."

As we speak below of "Nestorian," "Melkite," and "Jacobite" Christians, it will be important to keep in mind that they *all* accepted the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed as the chief symbol of Christian orthodoxy,<sup>(8)</sup> and thus were *all* prepared to confess that the "one Lord, Jesus Christ, . . . God from God, . . . was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried." Whatever differences these communities may have had with regard to the interpretation of such sentences, they all accepted the "paradox christology" as -- somehow -- correct.

## B. Later Christological Developments: From Nicaea to the *Dār al-Islām*<sup>(9)</sup>

The "paradox christology" of the Christian apostolic fathers did not amount to much more than a rhetorical model for saying what biblically-formed Christian faith considered necessary to say about Jesus Christ. It did not *explain* how it was that two sets of attributes, one divine and one human, could be predicated of one subject, nor did it *define* that in which the oneness of this subject subsisted. It offered no logical synthesis of, on the one hand, the biblical double divine/human predication of a single subject, and, on the other, Hellenistic religious common sense. The distinctive christological emphases of the famous theological "schools" associated with Alexandria and Antioch correspond to the two sides of this unresolved problem: the Alexandrians tended first to emphasize the singleness of subject of God-the-Word-become-flesh for our salvation, while the Antiochenes were quick to insist upon the distinctions necessary in order to maintain God's impassibility, that is, His immunity to suffering, change and decay.

These concerns led to varied interpretations and emphases with regard to the traditional christological paradox rhetoric. While all Nicene theologians were agreed that both things divine and things human could be predicated of the common subject Christ, differences emerged with regard to "cross-predication,"<sup>(10)</sup> in particular, the matching of *human* attributes and activities with the *divine* titles. For preeminent

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8. The "Nestorian" Church of the East officially accepted the Council of Nicaea at its synod at Seleucia-Ktesiphon in 410, and a council of 585 recognized that of Constantinople as well. For excerpts from the decisions of these councils, see BROCK, "Christology" (1985), 133, 136–38.

9. There is a vast literature dealing with the development of christological doctrine from the fifth through the seventh centuries. For the modest paragraphs that follow, the following works have been particularly useful. General introduction: PELIKAN, *Emergence* (1971), 226–77, idem, *Spirit* (1973), 37–90, and MEYENDORFF, *Christ* (1975). On the "Monophysites": TORRANCE, *Christology* (1988). On the "Chalcedonians": GRAY, *Chalcedon* (1979). On the "Nestorians": BROCK, "Christology" (1985).

10. What is usually called the *communicatio idiomatum*.

historical example: "Mary bore Christ" is a statement allowed by all, and "Christ is God" is a biblical confession of faith. Is it then permissible to combine the two and say (with much popular piety)<sup>(11)</sup> "Mary is the God-bearer (θεοτόκος)"? And if the statement be allowed, where does its truth value fall, on a scale ranging from unequivocal truth to pious shorthand not to be taken literally? To this first example must be added a second: is it permissible to pair "Christ suffered, was crucified, and died" with "Christ is God" to produce "God . . . suffered, was crucified, and died"?

For the Alexandrian christology as represented especially by Cyril, patriarch of Alexandria (412-42), by his Incarnation God the Word in literal fact came to possess, as his *own*, a human history -- including birth from the Virgin Mary and crucifixion under Pontius Pilate. The confessions that Mary is θεοτόκος, and that God the Word in flesh suffered, was crucified, and tasted death,<sup>(12)</sup> are affirmations of this mystery. For the Antiochene christology, for which Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople (428-31), became a spokesman and for some of whose currents he provided a patronymic, great care must be taken to distinguish and not to confuse the divine and the human in Christ. For Nestorius and many theologians of an Antiochene mind, the title θεοτόκος was dangerously misleading and, if allowed, in need of the most careful definition. Similarly, formulae about the death of Christ should make it clear that it is his humanity *alone* that suffered and died.

The christology of Cyril won the day at the Third Ecumenical Council (Ephesus, 431), at which Mary was proclaimed θεοτόκος and Nestorius deposed and exiled. This Alexandrian victory hardly meant the end of the Antiochene christology, however. At the Synod of Seleucia-Ktesiphon in 486, the "Church of the East," which gathered together Christians on the Sassanian side of the Byzantine/Sassanian frontier, adopted a straightforwardly Antiochene christological statement.<sup>(13)</sup> And within the Byzantine empire, many Antiochene christologists considered their position vindicated by the "dyophysite" christological definition of the Fourth Council at Chalcedon (451).<sup>(14)</sup>

Despite the satisfaction of some Antiochene theologians with Chalcedon, recent research strongly suggests that it was predominantly an Alexandrian, Cyrillian council. Unfortunately, however, it resulted in division between those who clung to Cyril's own formulations -- in particular his μία φύσις τοῦ θεοῦ Λόγου σεσαρκωμένη ("one incarnate nature of God the Word") -- as the touchstone of christological orthodoxy, and those who were willing to adopt the innovative vocabulary of the Chalcedonian Definition -- μία ὑπόστασις ("one hypostasis"), ἐν δύο φύσεσι ("in two natures") -- in

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11. See PELIKAN, *Emergence* (1971), 241.

12. This is the language of Cyril's twelfth anathema against Nestorius (WICKHAM, *Letters* (1983), 32-33).

13. See the ET in BROCK, "Christology" (1985), 133-34.

14. See GRAY, *Chalcedon* (1979), 80-89.

order to express and protect Cyril's deepest insights.<sup>(15)</sup> The severe polemics that ensued between these Cyrillian "conservatives" (who have traditionally but pejoratively been called "Monophysites") and Cyrillian "progressives" (those who accepted the Chalcedonian definition) obscure their similarities. The post-Chalcedonian controversies that broke out over "theopaschite" formulae are instructive in this regard. In the late fifth and early sixth centuries the *Trisagion* hymn was sung in the interpolated form "Holy God, holy Mighty One, holy Deathless One, *who was crucified for us*, have mercy upon us"<sup>(16)</sup> as an *anti*-Chalcedonian slogan. But the other famous "theopaschite" formula, "one of the Trinity was crucified," was proposed in 518-19 by the Scythian Monks as a *defence* of Chalcedon, and as such was promulgated as orthodox by the Emperor Justinian in 533.<sup>(17)</sup> All of Cyril's heirs understood that, through the Incarnation, God the Word made *his own* all that belongs to humanity (apart from sin) -- including suffering and death. This is as clear in the thought of the great anti-Chalcedonian disciple of Cyril, Severus of Antioch (ca. 465-538),<sup>(18)</sup> as it is in the "neo-Chalcedonian" teaching of the Fifth Council (Constantinople, 553), which declared that Christ's one ὑπόστασις is that of the eternal Word of God. Cyril's Chalcedonian and anti-Chalcedonian followers *all* gladly embraced the "paradox christology" at its sharpest: "God (the Word, the second person of the Trinity) died."

### C. "Melkites," "Jacobites," and "Nestorians"<sup>(19)</sup>

The Muslim conquests of the seventh century in effect created a Christian "denominational" system within the *Dār al-Islām*. Christians who had belonged to the (Chalcedonian) faith of the Byzantine emperor -- in Arabic called *al-Malikiyyah* or *al-Malikiyyūn* or Melkites, "the king's party" -- no longer enjoyed the privileges of

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15. The historical case for this is convincingly argued by GRAY, *Chalcedon* (1979), 7-16. I believe that we can say that the Chalcedonian Definition amounted to little more than a proposal -- though with imperial backing! -- for "second order" terminology in the service of the "first order" paradox rhetoric enthusiastically embraced by all Cyrillians.

16. See below, p. 271.

17. GRAY, *Chalcedon* (1979), 48-50, 57-58.

18. See TORRANCE, *Christology* (1988), 78.

19. It should be clear that these labels -- Melkite, Jacobite, Nestorian -- are *not* good descriptions of the major Christian ecclesial communities existing within the Islamic caliphate. Their theologies, certainly, would be better labelled with the names, respectively, of John of Damascus, Severus of Antioch, and Theodore of Mopsuestia! Furthermore, in the course of the centuries "Melkite" has shifted meaning so as to denote the *Catholic* heirs of the ancient Melkite community, "Jacobite" has mostly fallen into disuse, and "Nestorian" has come to denote a christological heresy angrily rejected by most of the heirs of the ancient Church of the East. It is therefore important to state that, while in this work I continue to use the traditional labels, I do so solely because they are ubiquitous in the Arabic texts, both Christian and Islamic, studied here.

"establishment," but were forced to compete on equal terms with the non-Chalcedonian Cyrillians, called *al-Ya'qūbiyyah* or *al-Ya'āqibah* or Jacobites (after their great ecclesiastical organizer Jacob Baradaeus). And with the disappearance of the old frontier and the conquest of the Sassanid Empire, the followers of the Church of the East -- in Arabic texts called *al-Nastūriyyah* or *al-Nasātirah* or Nestorians -- became fellow *ḍimmīs* with the Melkites and the Jacobites. These three communities brought their traditional christological stances and their attendant polemics with them into the *Dār al-Islām*. If anything, the polemics between the Melkites, Jacobites, and Nestorians within the *Dār al-Islām* were *sharpened* by their suddenly finding themselves together in a single political entity, sharing the same "disestablished" status *vis-à-vis* the ruling class. They therefore could and had to compete as equals. This new situation resulted in strong pressures on each community to differentiate itself from its competitors, although an opposing pressure should be noted: the occasional necessity of presenting a "common front" to Muslim questioners, for whom Christian divisions presented simply one more proof of the incoherence of Christian doctrine.<sup>(20)</sup>

The technical language of christology gradually came into Arabic, not without the confusion to be expected when three communities with their own previous theological and liturgical traditions in Greek and Syriac attempted to translate these traditions into a language already heavily freighted with Islamic religious significance. For example, with regard to the technical terms of Chalcedon (for which we might have expected a standard set of Arabic equivalents to take hold quickly) we find the terms used among Arabic-speaking Chalcedonians today, *uqnūm* (or *qunūm*) for ὑπόστασις and *ṭabī'ah* for φύσις, as early as in Theodore Abū Qurrah.<sup>(21)</sup> However, other Melkite writers used *ḡawhar* to represent φύσις;<sup>(22)</sup> indeed, *ḡawhar* regularly appears in ninth-century Arabic Christian texts as a rendering of Syriac *kyānā*, which for East and West Syrians alike regularly represented φύσις. As for ὑπόστασις, Peter of Bayt Ra's attempted in his *al-Burhān* to create adequate equivalents for the vocabulary of the neo-Chalcedonian christology by rendering it as *qiwām*, and then using *qawwama* and its derivatives for ἐνυφίστημι ("to enhypostasize") and related words.<sup>(23)</sup>

With regard to "theopaschite" language, considerable potential for confusion arose from the problem of how to speak Christianly of "God" in Arabic. The Qur'ān and the earliest Muslim tradition distinguished between *ilāh* and *Allāh*, as is clear from the first half of the Islamic confession of faith or *ṣahādah*: *lā ilāha illā -llāh*, "there is no god (*ilāh*) but God (*Allāh*)." Here and generally in Muslim usage, *ilāh*

20. On this "ecumenical" moment in Arabic christology, see (for example) SAMIR, "Terre-Sainte" (1980), 354–66.

21. For example, in his "Confession," DICK, "Écrits" (1959), 57/8.

22. For example, Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī (MARCUSOZZO, *Dialogue* (1986), 440–41 (#378), 472–75 (#437, 441)) or the author of *al-Ġāmi' wuḡūh al-īmān* (as in the passage cited below, pp. 265–66).

23. See for example CACHIA, *Demonstration* (1960–61), I, 69/12–13 (#109), with comment in SWANSON, "Ibn Taymiyya" (1990).

may denote any deity, including the true one, while *Allāh* functions very nearly as a proper name for the one true God.<sup>(24)</sup> In Christian use, the Greek (ὁ) θεός and the Syriac *alāhā* were less specialized, with ranges of meaning overlapping much of the ground covered by *both* Arabic terms. So, how were sentences such as "Christ, who is God and Son of God, was crucified," or simply "God died," to be translated?

No strict conventions governing the Christian use of *Allāh* and *ilāh* may be discerned in our literature. Christological traditions may help in explaining the differences between (a) the Jacobite Abū Rā'iṭah's daring-sounding theopaschite formulations, "*Allāh* was crucified," "*Allāh* died";<sup>(25)</sup> (b) the Melkite Abū Qurrah's confession that "Christ is God (*ilāh*) and Son of God (*ibn ilāh*) . . .<sup>(26)</sup> even if he suffered the pains and crucifixion attributed to him";<sup>(27)</sup> and (c) the Nestorian 'Ammār's statement, "this Son of God (*ibn Allāh*) was crucified, died, and was buried."<sup>(28)</sup>

The christologically-based scheme of usage suggested by the above paragraph -- that the one who died is *Allāh* for the Jacobites, *ilāh* for the Melkites, and *ibn Allāh* for the Nestorians -- is, unfortunately, far too tidy. It is upset by any number of texts, for example the following paragraph from the *Melkite* compendium *al-Ġāmi' wuḡūh al-īmān*, which speaks of Christ as "God (*Allāh*) the Son of God (*Allāh*), the one who . . . accepted . . . the death of the cross";<sup>(29)</sup>

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24. GIMARET (*Noms divins* (1988), 90) notes that al-Baḡdādī, al-Ġazālī, and Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī all argued that *Allāh* is God's *ism ḥaṣṣ* or proper name.

25. See, for example, his "On the Incarnation," GRAF, *Abū Rā'iṭah* (1951), 39 (#15), or his Arabic rendering of the *Trisagion* (see below, pp. 271–74).

26. Theodore also uses *ibn Allāh*, as in "On the Confirmation of the Gospel," BACHA, *Mayāmir* (1904), 73/7. It is especially in Melkite texts that we see a trend towards reserving *Allāh* for the Father, or for the Holy Trinity, as in *al-Ġāmi' wuḡūh al-īmān*, ch. 14, waḡh 1 (BL or. 4950, f. 76<sup>r</sup>), or the *Burhān* of Peter of Bayt Ra's (CACHIA, *Demonstration* (1960–61), I, 102/8–12 (#170)).

27. From "On the Law and the Gospel and the Chalcedonian Faith," BACHA, *Mayāmir* (1904), 151/9–10.

28. ابن الله هذا صُلب ومات ودُفن; from the *Kitāb al-burhān*, Ch. 3, HAYEK, *Apologie* (1977), 36\*/22. See also the parallel passage in his *Kitāb al-maṣā'il wa-l-aḡwibah*, II, 7, *ibid.*, 138\*. Regarding Nestorian use of such language, a comment of Sebastian Brock concerning the christology of the Church of the East in the fifth and sixth centuries bears repetition: "for all the traditional dislike of theopaschite language in writers of the East Syrian tradition, there is never any doubt that God the Word, in his humanity, suffered and died"; BROCK, "Christology" (1985), 131. But also see below, pp. 247–49.

29. BL or. 4950, f. 81<sup>v</sup>/9–17.

1 وقال أثناسيوس في قوله لمقسما الأسقف:

2 «أنت،

فعاتب بالموذّة الذين هم كفّار من اليهود جدد [sic]،  
أنّ ذلك الذي وُلد هو الله الأعلى،  
وهو يقبل الأوجاع،  
وهو صانع الجرائح.

3 عسى<sup>١</sup> أن يُقبلوا<sup>(١)</sup> من جهالتهم إلى علم الحقّ،  
ويؤمنوا<sup>(٢)</sup> أنّ ذلك الذي وُلد من مريم هو الله بن الله،  
ذلك الذي لم يزل عند الله،  
وبه كان كلّ شيء،

4 وبشيتّه جاء إلى ولاد البشر  
ويقبل كلّ ما هو آتٍ<sup>٢</sup> بعد ولاد البشر،  
إلى موت الصليب.»

(1) MS يؤمنون. (2) MS يقبلون.

#### TRANSLATION:

1 Athanasius, in his discourse to Bishop Maximus, said:

- 2 "As for you,  
lovingly reprove those who are unbelievers from among the new Jews,  
[persuading them] that the one who was born is God (*Allāh*) Most High,  
both accepting pains and performing wonders.
- 3 Perhaps they will turn from their ignorance to the knowledge of the truth,  
and will believe that the one who was born from Mary  
is God (*Allāh*) the Son of God (*Allāh*),  
the one who is eternally with God (*Allāh*)  
and by whom all things were made,
- 4 and that he willingly came to a human birth  
and accepted all that comes after a human birth,  
to the extent of the death of the cross."

This Arabic text corresponds not to the original Greek of Athanasius' letter but to the Syriac version, which has been edited and published by Robert Thomson.<sup>(30)</sup> A comparison of the Syriac and Arabic texts not only helps in understanding some of

30. THOMSON, *Athanasiana II* (1967), 37–41 [ET 31–34]. The Syriac original of the above passage is found at p. 40 [ET 33–34].

the less grammatical features of the latter,<sup>(31)</sup> but also confirms that every instance of Syriac *alāhā* is rendered by Arabic *Allāh*. And thus we are put on notice that linguistic background may be playing as great a role as christological considerations in the choice of terminology with which to express the death of the one confessed as God. For native Syriac speakers, translating *alāhā* as *Allāh* must have come very naturally, despite the different semantic ranges of the two terms, and thus we must be on guard against over-interpreting sentences such as "*Allāh* died" in Arabic Christian texts. But at the same time, we recognize that Muslims hearing "*Allāh* died" would have understood the sentence to mean something rather different than what was intended. By means of the *alāhā*/*Allāh* equation, Alexandrian "theopaschite" language came into Arabic in the form best calculated to inflame Muslim sensitivities, since for Muslims *Allāh* was the name *par excellence* of the one, undying God. Polemic that would have been sharp in any case was made all the more so as a result of differing understandings of *Allāh*.

In conclusion, it is safe to say that Muslims who troubled to become familiar with the teaching of Christians living within the *Dār al-Islām* would have encountered considerable terminological confusion. Despite this confusion, however, they would inevitably have heard the confession "... God ... died ..." (whether *ilāh* or, even more offensively, *Allāh*, and whatever the substitutions for the ellipses) in the context of a peculiarly paradoxical rhetoric of faith in Christ. Just so, a people whom Christian apologists sometimes referred to as the "new Jews,"<sup>(32)</sup> and sometimes as the "new heathen"<sup>(33)</sup> were confronted with a confession long experienced as a stumbling-block to the "original" Jews, and folly to the "former" heathen.

#### D. Blasphemous Nonsense!

At one point in his *al-Radd 'alā l-Naṣārā*, written sometime during the 850's, the Nestorian convert to Islam 'Alī al-Ṭabarī wrote:<sup>(34)</sup>

1 فإن كان يسوع المسيح هو الخالق الأزلي،  
أو صار مع الخالق الأزلي شيئاً واحداً،  
لا فرق بينهما في شيء من الأشياء؛

31. These features include the lack of أُنْ before أنت, the strange use of عاتب... أُنْ (translating عاتب... أُنْ) and perhaps the lack of the article in اليهود جدد (translating اليهود جدد). (س. ل.)

32. See the catholicos Timothy's statement in his Syriac Letter 40: "Also now ... in the days of the new Jews who are among us, ... the scandal of the cross has not left off"; H. CHEIKHO, *Dialectique* (1983), 275 (#7) [FT 186].

33. *ḥaḏtē ḥanpē'* in Nonnus of Nisibis; see above, p. (12), note 4.

34. KHALIFÉ/KUTSCH, "Radd" (1959), 134/1-8.

- فقد التفت على خالق الكلّ الخرق،  
وأحاطت بجسمه الأردية والسراويل!  
2 ومَنْ «وسع كرسيه السموات والأرض»  
وسعه<sup>(1)</sup> الأردية والمعلف!  
3 والذي برأ النسمة وفلق الحبة  
زار الولاثم،  
ونادم اليهود،  
وسُمي نجارًا،  
وانتسب إلى اسم وليّ،<sup>(2)</sup> يوسف النجار  
(كما يقول الإنجيل).  
4 والذي خلق الأفلاك والبحار ولأنهار  
استقلّ به حمار،  
ونبط من عود<sup>(3)</sup>!  
5 والذي لا أوّل له ولا آخر له  
ولا نَدّ ولا نظير  
كان له مائة ألف نظير  
في خلّقه وصورته وعدد سنيه وأيامه!  
6 والذي<sup>(4)</sup> ابتدع الأنفس والأبدان  
وبرأ الاستطاعات والبطش  
قتلته<sup>(5)</sup> شرذمة من اليهود، متعبدة مأسورة!

(1) Ed. وسعة. (2) Ed. والي. (3) Sic. Below, I have translated نبط as if it were على.  
(4) Ed. التي. (5) Ed. فقتله.

#### TRANSLATION:

- 1 If Jesus Christ was the eternal Creator,  
or if he became one thing with the eternal Creator,  
with no division between them in anything at all,  
then the Creator of all was wrapped in rags,  
and his body was enclosed in outer and inner garments!
- 2 The one whose "throne encompasses the heavens and the earth" [*al-Baqarah* (2):255]  
was encompassed by garments and a manger!
- 3 The one who created the breath and split the grain of corn [cf. *al-An'ām* (6):95]  
visited banquets,  
caroused with the Jews,  
was called a carpenter,  
and took the name of a guardian, Joseph the carpenter  
(as the Gospel says)!
- 4 The one who created the heavenly bodies, the seas, and the rivers  
was conveyed by a donkey,  
and hanged (?) from a wooden pole!
- 5 The one who has no beginning and no end, no peer and no equal,  
had a hundred thousand equals in nature, form, and number of years and days!

- 6 The one who contrived souls and bodies,  
who created capacities and strength,  
was killed by an enslaved, captive band of Jews!

We have before us a perfect example of the christological paradox rhetoric, *Islamic* version, differing from similar Christian texts only in that the divine attributes paradoxically matched with items from the biblical narrative of Christ's life are supplied by the Qur'ān and the early *kalām* rather than by late Hellenism's description of deity. But if the form of the passage is the same as many passages found in ancient Christian writings, its tone is entirely different. Christians *revelled* in the paradox rhetoric, celebrating by means of it the mystery of the Incarnation of God the Word for humanity's salvation. As for 'Alī, he simply asserts that this rhetoric violates the rules for speaking of God,<sup>(35)</sup> and a few lines later comments: "If they say these sorts of things about God, they do not merit a response, or even a rebuke!"<sup>(36)</sup>

It is not only in the writings of a convert from Christianity that we find Muslim awareness of the Christians' paradoxical rhetoric about Christ. Awareness of this kind of speech, and especially its "theopaschite" formulations, is evident in several of the oldest texts included in the present survey. Thus the caliph al-Mahdī asked the catholicos Timothy, "Is it possible that God should die, given who He is?"<sup>(37)</sup> And toward the end of their dialogue the caliph exclaimed, "Who dares to say that God died?! I do not think that even the demons say this!"<sup>(38)</sup> Theodore Abū Qurrah warned Christians that their icons of the crucified Christ would incite non-Christians to say: "Woe to you! Are you not ashamed that *this* is your God?"<sup>(39)</sup> And Abū Rā'īṭah recorded the exclamation of a Muslim *mutakallim*, and his attempt to pose a dilemma proving the inanity of the formulations he had heard:<sup>(40)</sup>

العجب لعقولكم، كيف احتملت هذا القول وصدقت بإلاه يموت ويُقتل!  
فأخبروا عن مَنْ مات: أيجوز أن يكون حيًّا؟ وعن مَنْ ليس بحيًّا،  
أيجوز أن يكون إلهًا مدبرًا؟  
فإذا وجبتم أنه قد مات، فقد بطل، وإذا بطل فقد بطل التدبير  
والسياسة، وإذا بطلت السياسة فقد بقي العالم بلا مدبر!

35. *العجب لعقولكم، كيف احتملت هذا القول وصدقت بإلاه يموت ويُقتل!*؛ *ibid.*, lines 8–9. On 'Alī's use of *šarā'it Allāh*, see next page.

36. *فإن قالوا عن الله مثل ذلك، لم يستحقوا جواباً، ولا عتاباً*؛ *ibid.*, lines 11–12.

37. *صلى الله عليه وسلم*؛ MINGANA, "Apology" (1928), 113/2/19.

38. *صلى الله عليه وسلم*؛ *ibid.*, 160/1/14–16.

39. *ويحكم! ما تستحون من أن هذا إلهكم؟* in "On Prostration to the Icons," DICK,  *Icônes* (1986), 215 (#19).

40. In "On the Incarnation," GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭa* (1951), 39 (#15).

## TRANSLATION:

How astonishing your intellects are, how they have endured and assented to this statement about a god who dies and is killed!

Inform us about the one who died: is it possible that He be alive? And concerning the one who is not alive, is it possible that He be a god, ruler [of the world]?

If you respond that He died, then He came to nought; and if He came to nought, then His rule and governance came to nought; and if His governance came to nought, then the world remained without a ruler!<sup>(41)</sup>

These examples give a sense of the mixture of astonishment and scorn with which Muslims reacted to the paradoxical Christian language about Christ. It is not difficult to explain this reaction. After all, the *otherness of God from all that is created* is a leading theme of the Qur'ān. There we read, for example: ليس كمثله شيء ("Like Him there is nought"),<sup>(42)</sup> لا تُدركه الأبصار ("The eyes attain Him not"),<sup>(43)</sup> لا يُكُنْ لَهُ شَرِيكٌ فِي الْمَلِكِ ("He has no associate in sovereignty").<sup>(44)</sup> While comparisons must be made with caution,<sup>(45)</sup> there are certain similarities between the Qur'ānic negations such as the ones just cited and their expansions in the early *kalām*,<sup>(46)</sup> on the one hand, and the negative (ā-) attributes (*unoriginate*, *impassible*, *atemporal*, *invisible*, *impalpable*, etc.) of the Hellenistic description of divinity as taken over in Christian God-discourse, on the other. These similarities are sufficient that 'Alī al-Ṭabarī could confidently claim in his *al-Radd 'alā l-Naṣārā* that Christians and Muslims agree upon a long list of what he calls the *ṣarā'iṭ Allāh*, "conditions of God": eternal (*qadīm*), singular (*fard*), without associates, family or companions, incomprehensible, without increase or decrease, without earthly needs or passions, incomparable, indescribable, unsleeping, all-knowing, all-victorious, and certainly not subject to decay and death.<sup>(47)</sup>

Most Christians would have conceded numerous points of agreement with 'Alī's description of God, and we have already seen how a number of these or similar attributes could be predicated of Christ by means of the "paradox christology." What

41. This argument has a long history in the form "Who ruled the world when God became incarnate?" See the discussion, from the year 644, of 'Umayr b. Sa'd with the Syrian patriarch John; NAU, "Colloque" (1915), 249/5–7 [FT 258 (#4)].

42. *al-Ṣūrā* (42):11.

43. *al-An'ām* (6):103.

44. *al-Isrā'* (17):111, *al-Furqān* (25):2.

45. R.M. Frank has been eloquent in warning against attempting to understand the early Islamic *kalām* (not to speak of the Qur'ān itself!) in terms of the "Greek" philosophical or patristic theological heritage. See FRANK, *Beings* (1978), 5.

46. In particular, in the doctrines of the Mu'tazilah (the *ahl al-'adl wa-l-tawḥīd*). See al-Aṣ'arī's impressive summary of Mu'tazilite God-discourse in his *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*; RITTER, *Lehren* (1929–33), 155/2–156/14 [ET WATT, *Period* (1973), 246–47].

47. The complete list of 'Alī's "twelve points of agreement" is found in KHALIFÉ/KUTSCH, "Radd" (1959), 128/19–129/2.

distinguishes 'Alī's use of this list, however, is a presupposition that remains unspoken, but which is the precise *denial* of the "paradox christology": God has attributes appropriate to His divinity, human beings have attributes appropriate to their creatureliness, and *they may not be predicated of one and the same subject*. That which has divine attributes is God -- and *not* human; that which has specifically human attributes is human -- and *not* God. Given this principle, *any* aspect of the human life of Christ may function as proof that he is *not* God -- as 'Alī tirelessly asserts in *al-Radd*, where he is prepared to use even the New Testament accounts of Christ's passion and death as grist for his polemical mill.<sup>(48)</sup> The agony in Gethsemane and the cry of dereliction from the cross prove that (an agonizing, abandoned) Christ addressed *another* as God -- and therefore was not himself God.<sup>(49)</sup> The narrative of the Last Supper, and that of Christ's post-resurrection appearance to the disciples, prove that Christ was body and blood, flesh and bone -- and therefore not God.<sup>(50)</sup> The confession that Christ was "killed in the days of Pontius Pilate" admits that he was temporally limited -- and therefore not God.<sup>(51)</sup> That his hands could be nailed and his side pierced, that he could bleed and give up his spirit, all prove that Christ was subject to division and separation -- and therefore not God.<sup>(52)</sup>

This sort of polemic is by no means new with 'Alī al-Ṭabarī; its roots are to be found in the Qur'ān. Take, for example, a text that is given prominence in the refutation of al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm,<sup>(53)</sup> *al-Mā'idah* (5):75. To those who say that "God is the Messiah, Mary's Son,"<sup>(54)</sup> the Qur'ān's response is: *ما المسيح ابن مريم إلا رسول قد خلت من قبله الرسل، وأمه صديقة كانا يأكلان الطعام* ("The Messiah, son of Mary, was only an Apostle; Apostles before him passed away; his mother was a just woman; *they*

48. In *al-Radd*, allusions to the gospel passion narratives are so frequent that the reader would get the impression that 'Alī accepts them as historically reliable were it not for the very occasional disclaimer, *فيما يزعمون* ("as they claim," e.g., *ibid.*, 135/6) or *فيما يذكرون* ("as they say," e.g., *ibid.*, 139/15–16). Perhaps it was nervousness about the Islamic propriety of using the Christian accounts of the passion of Christ in this way that led the author of "The Letter of 'Umar," who in many things follows 'Alī al-Ṭabarī quite closely, to refrain from any such use, and instead to emphasize his belief in the falsification of the Christian scriptures; see GAUDEUL, "Letter" (1984), 135–36. In addition, "'Umar's" quotations from the gospels are very frequently introduced with *زعمتم* ("you have claimed"); see SOURDEL, "Pamphlet" (1966), esp. 29–31.

49. Gethsemane: KHALIFÉ/KUTSCH, "Radd" (1959), 127/6–8, 132/4–6, 145/4–14. Cry of dereliction: *ibid.*, 124/11–12, 144/21–22.

50. Last Supper: *ibid.*, 124/12–16. Post-resurrection appearance: *ibid.*, 125/6–10. Cf. al-'Aṣārī's Mu'tazilite creed: *ليس بجسم ولا شبح ولا جثة ولا صورة ولا لحم ولا دم* ("He is not a body, a figure, a corpse, or an image; He is neither flesh nor blood"); RITTER, *Lehren* (1929–33), 155/3–4.

51. KHALIFÉ/KUTSCH, "Radd" (1959), 126/9–11. Cf. al-'Aṣārī's creed: *لا يجري عليه زمان* ("Time does not pass over Him"); RITTER, *Lehren* (1929–33), 155/9.

52. KHALIFÉ/KUTSCH, "Radd" (1959), 130/21; 131/15–16. Once again, compare the Mu'tazilite creed: *لا افتراق . . . ولا تبعض* ("no separation . . . nor partition"); RITTER, *Lehren* (1929–33), 155/6–7.

53. See DI MATTEO, "Confutazione" (1921–22), 307/11–308/9 [IT 335–36].

54. *إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ*; *al-Mā'idah* (5):72.

*both ate food.*"). For the Qur'ān, the fact that Christ *ate food* is a clear and convincing refutation of any claim to his divinity, a conclusion that al-Qāsim puts into rhymed prose:<sup>(55)</sup>

وفيما جعل الله من طعمه وأكله  
من الآيات البيّنة الجليّة،  
ما يبطل ما قالت به النصارى فيه  
من الأقوال الكاذبة المفترية الرديئة.

#### TRANSLATION:

In that which God has declared about his eating food,  
in clear, perspicuous verses  
Is that which voids what the Christians have said  
in lying, blasphemous, wicked discourses.

A human activity such as eating simply may not be predicated of a bearer of divine attributes. Here and elsewhere, in complete contrast to the New Testament, the Qur'ān gives no warrant for the simultaneous predication of divine and human attributes to Jesus – or to anyone else. The Creator/creature, Lord/slave distinction is a strict either/or. In Qur'ānic speech, the divine *mubtada'* and any human *ḥabar*<sup>(56)</sup> are only linked by negative particles; there is no parallel to the New Testament's ἐγένετο (John 1:14).

Christ's eating food as a refutation of claims about his divinity was an argument that could be readily elaborated. Supplementing *al-Mā'idah* (5):75 with parallel<sup>(57)</sup> and related<sup>(58)</sup> Qur'ānic passages results in a *list* of activities which may not be attributed to God: eating, drinking, walking in the marketplace, sleeping.<sup>(59)</sup> Those who wrote polemics against Christian beliefs created yet longer lists, carefully shaping them for maximum rhetorical effect. Consider one of the earliest such lists in our possession, a comment of al-Ġāḥiẓ on the Christian Byzantines:<sup>(60)</sup>

فلو لا أننا رأينا بأعيننا، وسمعنا بأذاننا،  
لما صدّقنا، ولا قبلنا  
أن قوماً متكلمين، وأطبّاء، ومنجمين، ودُهّاء،

55. DI MATTEO, "Confutazione" (1921–22), 307/19–21 [IT 335].

56. The *mubtada'* and *ḥabar* are, respectively, the subject and predicate of a nominal sentence.

57. *al-Anbiyā'* (21):8; *al-Furqān* (25):7, 20; *al-Mu'minūn* (23):33.

58. E.g., *al-Baqarah* (2):255.

59. See, for example, "The Letter of 'Umar," GAUDEUL, "Correspondence" (1984), 144 (#44–45).

60. PELLAT, "Croyances" (1967), 99/19–100/5 [FT 86].

وَحُسَابًا، وَكُتْبَةً، وَحُذَاقَ كُلِّ صِنْعَةٍ،  
 يَقُولُونَ فِي إِنْسَانٍ رَأَوْهُ يَأْكُلُ وَيَشْرَبُ،  
 وَيَبُولُ وَيَنْجُو،  
 وَيَجُوعُ وَيَعْطَشُ،  
 يَكْتَسِي وَيَعْرَى،  
 وَيَزِيدُ وَيَنْقُصُ،  
 ثُمَّ يُقْتَلُ (بِزَعْمِهِمْ) وَيُصَلَّبُ،  
 إِنَّهُ رَبُّ خَالِقٍ، وَإِلَهُ رَازِقٍ،  
 وَإِنَّهُ قَدِيمٌ، غَيْرُ مُحْدَثٍ،  
 يُمِيتُ الْأَحْيَاءَ وَيُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى،  
 وَإِنْ شَاءَ خَلَقَ أَضْعَافًا فِي الدُّنْيَا؛  
 ثُمَّ يَفْتَخِرُونَ بِقَتْلِهِ وَصَلْبِهِ،  
 كَمَا يَفْتَخِرُ الْيَهُودُ بِقَتْلِهِ وَصَلْبِهِ!

#### TRANSLATION:

Had we not seen it with our own eyes and heard it with our own ears,  
 we would not have believed or accepted  
 that a nation of theologians, physicians, astrologers, people of ingenuity,  
 mathematicians, scribes, and masters of every craft  
 could say of a man they had seen eating and drinking,  
 urinating and defecating,<sup>(61)</sup>  
 hungering and thirsting,  
 dressing and undressing,  
 increasing and decreasing,  
 and finally killed (according to their claim) and crucified,  
 that he is a Creator Lord, and a Sustainer God,  
 eternal, without beginning in time,  
 putting the living to death, and bringing the dead to life,  
 able to create, if he willed, many times over what is in the world;  
 and then to glory in his killing and crucifixion,  
 as the Jews glory in having killed and crucified him!

Here we see a polemical use of the account of the crucifixion that became extremely common in the Islamic *radd* literature: as the *climax* of a list of Christ's earthly vicissitudes, none of which (for the Qur'ānicly-formed mind) may be

61. al-Ġāḥiẓ is our first witness in the Islamic polemic for this particular pair of human activities. (We also find it in his *al-Radd 'alā l-Naṣārā*, 'ABD AL-SALĀM, *al-Ġāḥiẓ* (1979), III, 350 or ŠARQAWĪ, *Muhtār* (1984), 125. For later instances, see 'Alī al-Ṭabarī's *al-Radd 'alā l-Naṣārā*, KHALIFÉ/KUTSCH, "Radd" (1959), 131/21, 134/10; or "The Story of Wāṣil, GRIFFITH, "Bashīr" (1990), 318/13.) Its polemical effectiveness was such that, in the thirteenth century, the Coptic apologist al-Šafī b. al-'Assāl wrote a (now lost) treatise on the *tagawwuṣ* ("defecation") of Christ; see SAMIR, "Chapitres" (1985), 36.

predicated of God.<sup>(62)</sup> For al-Ġāḥiẓ, the Christian claim that the one confessed as Lord and God was crucified is incredible nonsense, an occasion for (finely-honed rhetorical) astonishment. Others are even stronger in their condemnation. While derivatives of the Arabic root *fry* ("to fabricate lying, calumnious speech"; nearly, "to blaspheme") are used by Muslim polemicists to describe Christian doctrine in general,<sup>(63)</sup> the sense of calumny or blasphemy is perhaps at its sharpest when the claim at issue is the *death of the one who is God*, or with whom God is united in some intimate sense. Thus the redactor of the Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī debate has a Muslim bedouin burst out with:<sup>(64)</sup>

إنكم، يا معشر النصارى،  
تفترون على الله جهاراً،  
إذ تزعمون أن كلمة الله الأزليّة سكنت في عيسى،  
ظاهره وباطنه،  
وأن عيسى صُلب على خشبة،  
وطُعن بالحربة،  
وثُقبت يداه ورجلاه!

#### TRANSLATION:

You community of Christians  
blaspheme (*taftarūn*) openly against God,  
because you claim that the eternal Word of God dwelled in 'Īsā  
outwardly and inwardly,  
and that 'Īsā was crucified on a tree,  
stuck with a spear,  
and pierced in his hands and feet!

And against those who claim that the Creator ate in Jesus Christ's eating, hungered in his hungering, wept in his weeping, fled in his fleeing, *and was killed in his killing*, 'Alī al-Ṭabarī exclaims:<sup>(65)</sup>

62. Other good examples of such lists are found in the *Radd* of each of the following: al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm (DI MATTEO, "Confutazione" (1921–22), 307/14–21); 'Alī al-Ṭabarī (KHALIFÉ/KUTSCH, "Radd" (1959), 131/18–132/1 and 133/19–134/11); and Abū 'Īsā al-Warrāq (PLATTI, *Incarnation* (1987), 97 (#83).

63. For the Qur'ānic basis to such usage, see *al-Nisā'* (4):48. In "On Christ's Freely Chosen Death" Abū Qurrah records the following exchange between a Christian and a Muslim: "Don't you claim that we blaspheme (*naftarī*) against your God?" "Yes, with blasphemy of the worst sort (*ašadd al-iftirā'*)!" SAMIR, "Ṣalb" (1984), 417 (#4).

64. MARCUZZO, *Dialogue* (1986), #326–28.

65. In *al-Radd 'alā l-Naṣārā*, KHALIFÉ/KUTSCH, "Radd" (1959), 131/25–132/1.

وهذا من أشنع ما يكون من الفرية والافتتان،  
وأشد ما يكون من التصغير  
لعظمة ذي الجلال والإكرام!

#### TRANSLATION:

This is the most repugnant possible blasphemy (*firyah*)  
and seduction [by false doctrine],  
and the worst possible belittling of the greatness  
of Him whose is the majesty and the honor!

## II. Christian Explanations, Muslim Refutations

### A. Christian Attempts to Explain

Christians living within the *Dār al-Islām* were by no means defenceless against the charges of nonsense and blasphemy coming from Muslim questioners and polemicists. The christologies that Nestorians, Melkites, and Jacobites brought into Arabic had been forged in bitter controversy, and charges such as those the Muslims were making were not entirely new to them.

As has already been noted, the Christian authors studied here *all* confessed the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed, and were committed to the "paradox christology" in the form in which the second article of the creed presents it: the "one Lord Jesus Christ" is one single subject, but there is a divine/human duality of predication: "God from God"/"crucified for us under Pontius Pilate." All the confessions agreed that it is at least permissible to think of a divinity/humanity, *lāhūt/nāsūt* distinction within the one Christ. For each of the Christian communities, therefore, the *lāhūt/nāsūt* distinction was ready to hand as a first step in explaining to Muslims that Christians do *not* predicate suffering, death, and change to God from the standpoint of His eternal divinity. If an anonymous Nestorian apologist could write, "He was killed in his humanity (*bi-nāsūtihi*) but neither killed nor crucified in his divinity (*bi-lāhūtihi*),"<sup>(66)</sup> his language is precisely echoed by the Jacobite monk Eustathius at the opposite end of the christological spectrum: "But we say that he died in his humanity (*bi-nāsūtihi*), not in his divinity (*bi-lāhūtihi*)."<sup>(67)</sup> And in the Chalcedonian center we find Bishop Peter of Bayt Ra's writing, "It is he who died in his humanity (*bi-nāsūtihi*), . . . and it is he who rose on the third day by the power of his divinity

66. فيكون قُتل بناسوته وما قُتل وما صُلب بلاهوته, from *al-Radd 'alā man ḡaḥada l-ṣalḥ*, below, p. 300 (#3).

67. لكنّا نقول إنّه مات بناسوته، لا بلاهوته, from the *Kitāb Uṣṭāt*, Mingana chr. ar. 52, f. 155<sup>v</sup>.

(*bi-qudrat lāhūtihi*).<sup>(68)</sup>

While the three communities had this recourse to the *lāhūt/nāsūt* distinction in common,<sup>(69)</sup> each community used and explained it in distinctive ways. To get a sense of the varying dialectical and illustrative devices used by Nestorians, Melkites, and Jacobites in defending their speech about the death of Christ from charges of nonsense and blasphemy, we take each community in turn.

## 1. Nestorians

The Antiochene christological grammar adopted by the Church of the East had always been strongly shaped by a concern to shield the divine from the vicissitudes of the human -- in particular suffering and death. Nestorian speech about the death of Christ was therefore less provocative to Muslims than the "theopaschite" language of the Melkite and Jacobite heirs of the Cyrillian christology, a fact which Nestorian apologists were quite prepared to exploit in seeking the regard of Muslim officials. The catholicos Timothy accordingly told the caliph al-Mahdī that God gave Muḥammad victory over the Byzantines because of their impiety in ascribing suffering and death to God in the flesh,<sup>(70)</sup> and later elicited al-Mahdī's relative approval for his assertion that "it is the human nature which God the Word put on from us that suffered and died" over the Melkite and Jacobite "God suffered and died in the flesh."<sup>(71)</sup> A generation later, the Nestorian author of the "al-Hāsimī"-*"al-Kindī"* correspondence confidently had "al-Hāsimī" say that, whereas the Jacobites are "the most unbelieving group [among the Christians], the most repulsive in doctrine, the most evil in belief, and the farthest from the truth," the Nestorians are "closest and most similar to the doctrines of those who speak justly among the theologians and philosophers, and the most inclined to our doctrine, [that of] the Muslim community."<sup>(72)</sup>

These Nestorian apologists appear to have been untroubled by Muslim charges that Christians blaspheme in their discourse about the death of Christ. It was others

68. ... هو الذي مات بناسوته، وهو الذي قام في اليوم الثالث بقدرة لاهوته. from *al-Burhān*, CACHIA, *Demonstration* (1960), I, 111 (#191).

69. In addition to the *lāhūt/nāsūt* distinction in Christ, the communities were also agreed upon the reality of the *union* between them which was *not* undone by Christ's death, according to teaching standard in the Church since Gregory of Nyssa: after Christ's death, his divinity remained united with both his soul (which descended to the dead) and his body (which was placed in the tomb); see WICKHAM, "Omnipresence" (1981), esp. 285. In consequence, Christian apologists were not greatly troubled when Muslims asked the question: what happened to the union when Christ died? See Abū Rā'īṭah's response to a Muslim's question (GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭa* (1951), 40–41 (#16)) and Yaḥyā b. 'Adī's response to al-Warrāq's question (PLATTI, *Incarnation* (1987), 32 (#26)).

70. MINGANA, "Apology" (1928), 134/2/5–9 [ET 62], and see PUTMAN/SAMIR, *Église* (1975), 32\* (#167) and CASPAR, "Versions" (1977), 151 (#49).

71. MINGANA, "Apology" (1928), 159/1/17–160/1/16 [ET 87–88].

72. TARTAR, "Dialogue" (1977), 10/1–5 [FT idem, *Dialogue* (1985), 89].

-- the Jacobites and Melkites -- who predicated death of *God*; it was a reasonably simple matter to explain that Nestorians spoke in a different manner. When, for example, the caliph al-Mahdī asked "Can God die?" Timothy's reply took but a few lines:<sup>(73)</sup>

The Son of God died in that which was united to us. He did not die in that in which he was God. Just as when the royal purple and garments are rent the shame of it is reckoned to be the king's, so also is reckoned the death of the body of the Son of God.<sup>(74)</sup>

What Timothy is willing to affirm as *literally* true is not the blasphemous "God died," but a formulation at two genitives' remove: "the body of the Son of God died."<sup>(75)</sup> He then is prepared to allow the formulation "the Son of God died," but in a carefully circumscribed sense: death is "reckoned" to the Son of God as the shame of the violated royal purple is reckoned to the king. Presumably, the caliph al-Mahdī found this answer to put satisfactory distance between God and death.

Timothy responded in similar fashion to a Muslim Aristotelian, according to Timothy's (Syriac) Letter 40, which reports on the conversation to the priest Sargis.<sup>(76)</sup> According to Timothy, the one fixed to the cross was "the Son of God in the flesh," of whom it may be said that he both did *and* did not suffer and die: the Father's consubstantial Word does not suffer nor die, but the flesh suffered, died, and was raised. When the Muslim objects that if the flesh died, then God who was *in* the flesh must have died as well, Timothy responds that "in" does not refer to identity of hypostasis or essence, but to *location*. Thus if water or butter are *in* a container that breaks, this does not mean that they too are broken. The light *in* a mirror that breaks is not broken. God is *in* the sea, *in* the fire, *in* the field, but is neither drowned, nor burned, nor torn by the plough.<sup>(77)</sup>

If Timothy could use formulations such as "the Son of God died" in conversations with Muslims,<sup>(78)</sup> the pressure of Muslim criticism seems to have led some later Nestorian apologists to avoid them in inter-religious discussions. In *al-Radd 'alā man ġaḥada l-ṣalb* we find the precisely stated rule that "Christ" is the joint subject for the nature (*ġawhar*) of God and the nature of man, and that "Christ"

73. Syriac text in MINGANA, "Apology" (1928) 113/2/18–114/1/4. Cf. PUTMAN/SAMIR, *Église* (1975), 35\* (#183–85).

74. The Arabic translation of this text (longer recension) speaks of Christ's human *tabī'ah* ("nature") and divine *uqnūm* ("hypostasis"), but these technical terms are absent in the original Syriac. See PUTMAN/SAMIR, *Église* (1975), #183–85.

On the comparison of Christ's body to the royal purple, which is by no means new with Timothy, see BROCK, "Metaphor" (1982), 18.

75. Or, as noted two paragraphs back: the human nature of God the Word died.

76. Ed. and FT: H. CHEIKHO, *Dialectique* (1983).

77. *Ibid.*, 325–26 (#280–89) [FT 265–67].

78. Recall that 'Ammār al-Baṣrī also used this formulation; see p. 236 above.

was killed "in his humanity" (*bi-nāsūtihi*) but not "in his divinity" (*bi-lāhūtihi*).<sup>(79)</sup> This corresponds to the rule stated later by the great Nestorian apologist Īliyyā (d. 1046), metropolitan of Nisibis,<sup>(80)</sup> according to whom "Christ" is the term for the union between "the Lord" (who is the subject of the divine attributes and activities) and "Jesus" (who is the subject of the human attributes and activities). For apologetic purposes, at least, Īliyyā is prepared to insist on a sharp distinction between the three terms even in the phrase "one Lord Jesus Christ" in the Nicene creed: while "Christ" is the common subject of all that is said in the creed's second article, the contents of that article are properly to be sorted between "the Lord" on the one hand and "Jesus" on the other.<sup>(81)</sup>

This particular example takes us more than a century beyond our period of study, but is at least indicative of the direction of Nestorian apologetics, the practitioners of which firmly rejected theopaschite formulations and found in the *lāhūt/nāsūt*, Word/flesh, and even "Lord"/"Jesus" distinctions useful apologetic tools for explaining to Muslim questioners how God remains essentially immune from that which befalls Jesus.

## 2. Melkites

Our Arabic Melkite sources provide a range of apologetic devices and comment thereon that spans the Antiochene-Alexandrian spectrum. The Alexandrian end is represented early on by the great Theodore Abū Qurrah. While his affirmation "the eternal Son, begotten from the Father before the ages, died for us, not in his divine nature but in his human nature"<sup>(82)</sup> is carefully formulated over against anyone who would say that God died in His divine nature,<sup>(83)</sup> he does not in general resort to analogies such as those of the catholicos Timothy in order to qualify what he means by "the eternal Son . . . died." For Abū Qurrah, the death of Christ is always the death of one who is truly *God*, since otherwise there is no salvation.<sup>(84)</sup>

79. See below, pp. 299–300 (#3).

80. In Īliyyā's first *maḡlis* with the Muslim *wazīr* Abū l-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī al-Maḡribī, ed. and FT: SAMIR, "Entretien" (1979).

81. Ibid., 110–13 (#216–221). A comment made some years ago by Van Roey is apposite here: "It has frequently seemed to us, in the course of our reading of the Nestorian apologists, that the Muslim polemic sometimes induced them to reinforce the duality of the hypostases which they admit in Christ"; VAN ROEY, *Nonnus* (1948), 58, note 138.

82. إِنَّ الابنَ الْأَزَلِيَّ الْمَوْلُودَ مِنَ الْآبِ قَبْلَ الدَّهْوَ مَاتَ عَنَّا، لَا فِي طَبِيعَتِهِ الْإِلَهِيَّةِ وَلَكِنْ فِي طَبِيعَتِهِ الْإِنْسِيَّةِ, in "On the Death of Christ," BACHA, *Mayāmīr* (1904), 59/3–4.

83. إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَاتَ فِي طَبِيعَتِهِ الْإِلَهِيَّةِ; ibid., 56/12. Abū Qurrah accused the Jacobites of saying this.

84. See above, pp. 226–28. An analogy that Abū Qurrah did use over against non-Chalcedonian Christians is that of sight and hearing in a single person: sight is of the eye and not the ear, and hearing is of the ear and not the eye, but both are to be attributed to the one *qunūm* ("hypostasis") or person. See his brief "Confession," DICK, "Écrits" (1959) 59/12–13 [FT 62].

Other Melkite apologists, however, made free use of analogies in order to blunt Muslim charges of nonsense and blasphemy. Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī, attempting to illustrate how the Word of God might dwell in Jesus without suffering pain and death, gives the analogy of the angel who remains with each human individual as long as he or she lives *without* being affected by any affliction suffered by that individual -- not even that of being shut in a pot and boiled in oil.<sup>(85)</sup> And to show that the Word was unaffected when Christ was pierced by lance and nails, Ibrāhīm offers the analogy of a camel afflicted by the sun: one may butcher and dismember the animal without in any way affecting the sun that continues to shine on it.<sup>(86)</sup> Similar sun-analogies are to be found elsewhere, for example in "On the Sufferings of Our Lord Christ," where we read of the house which may be destroyed without affecting the sun that shines on it and fills it with light.<sup>(87)</sup> A bit later in the same text, the author presents the analogy of a church in which are found the Book of the Lord, His Angel, and the Body of Christ upon the altar. An "ignorant man" may beat on the wall of the church, spit on it, and insult it, but the holy things inside the church do not suffer any harm.<sup>(88)</sup>

The apologetic utility of the above analogies is immediately obvious: they provided a simple way for Christians to tell Muslims and those influenced by them that God *in Himself* is no more affected by Christ's sufferings than the angels, the sun, or the holy things of the analogies. Where the analogies fail, however, is in giving any sense of the *unity of subject* upon which orthodox christological doctrine insisted. There is no single subject in similes involving a man and his guardian angel, the sun and that upon which it shines, or a church's wall and its contents. Instead, like the Nestorian Timothy's analogies of the king and the royal purple, the water and the vessel, or the light and the mirror, everything depends on distinguishing between *two* logical subjects, one of which indignity and death or destruction may be predicated, another which remains untouched. Whatever the *ad hoc* utility of such analogies in debate -- and no doubt it was considerable -- taken *alone* they imply an extreme Nestorian christology.<sup>(89)</sup>

A more theologically sophisticated attempt to explain the Christian confession of the death of the Son of God is to be found in *al-Burhān* of Bishop Peter of Bayt Ra's. Concerning the passion of Christ, Peter wrote:<sup>(90)</sup>

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85. MARCUZZO, *Dialogue* (1986), #332–49.

86. *Ibid.*, #350–53.

87. Sinai ar. 553, f. 31<sup>r</sup>v. A sun/house analogy for the Incarnation may also be found in Book I of the *Burhān* of Bishop Peter of Bayt Ra's: CACHIA, *Demonstration* (1960–61), I, 70 (#112).

88. Sinai ar. 553, ff. 37<sup>v</sup>–38<sup>r</sup>.

89. It may be noted that John of Damascus used the example of the sun shining upon a tree being chopped down in order to illustrate the impassibility of the Word's divine nature, but immediately went on to emphasize that such examples are *merely* examples, and are never perfect. *De fide orthodoxa* III,26 (KOTTER, *Expositio* (1973), 169).

90. CACHIA (1960–61), I, 111 (#191), and see the preceding and following paragraphs.

- 1 هو الذي سُمِّرت يداه ورجلاه على خشبة الصليب بناسوته،  
وهو الذي أظلم الشمس في جميع الدنيا بلاهوته،  
وزلزل الأرض وبعث الموتى من قبورهم وهو على الصليب.
- 2 هو الذي طعن جنبه فجرح بناسوته،  
وهو الذي ترك نفس ناسوته حين أراد، من قبل أن يُطعن جسده،  
بقُدرة لاهوته،  
على أن يدع<sup>(1)</sup> نفس ناسوته إذا شاء، ويأخذها أيضاً إذا شاء.
- 3 هو الذي مات بناسوته المحتملة للموت  
بمفارقة نفسها المخلوقة من جسدها المخلوق،  
وهو الذي قام في اليوم الثالث بقُدرة لاهوته على إقامة هيكلها الناصي.

(1) Ed. تدع (although the correct reading is indicated in a note).

#### TRANSLATION:

1 *It is he whose hands and feet were nailed to the cross in his humanity -- and it is he who darkened the sun throughout the world in his divinity, and shook the earth and raised the dead from their graves while he was on the cross.*

2 *It is he whose side was pierced and wounded in his humanity -- and it is he who by the power of his divinity relinquished the soul of his humanity at the time he desired, before his body was pierced, since he lays down the soul of his humanity if he wishes, and takes it up again if he wishes [cf. John 10:18].*

3 *It is he who died in his humanity, which bore death through the separation of its created soul from its created body -- and it is he who rose on the third day by the power of his divinity to raise its human temple.*

In this passage the unity of subject is vigorously asserted by the repeatedly intoned *huwa -llāqī*, "it is he who." But just as constantly intoned are the modifiers *bi-nāsūtihi* ("in his humanity") and *bi-(quwwat) lāhūtīhī* ("in his divinity" or "by the power of his divinity"). Peter matches divine and human attributes of Jesus Christ in the manner of the paradox rhetoric of the apostolic fathers, but carefully segregates the ones from the others by the use of the *lāhūt/nāsūt* distinction. As with the Nestorians, the *lāhūt/nāsūt* distinction here operates as an apologetic device offering an appearance, at least, of an explanation why the paradox christology does not necessarily imply the attribution of death to divinity.

### 3. Jacobites

For Jacobite apologists writing in Arabic, the use of the *lāhūt/nāsūt* distinction to discuss the death of Christ -- which in Jacobite texts is regularly referred to as the

death of *God*<sup>(91)</sup> -- usually took the form of a dialectical argument hinging on the legitimacy of predicating of a *whole* that which is true of its *parts*. For example, in his treatise "On the Incarnation" Abū Rā'īṭah argues as follows:<sup>(92)</sup> the death of God of which Christians speak is not like a human death. God dies and is killed "in the body" (*bi-l-ġasad*), that is, "from the standpoint of the body" (*min ġihat al-ġasad*), and not "from the standpoint of his divinity" (*min ġihat lāhūtihi*). Even though the divinity is above death and change, the noun "death" may be predicated of the incarnate one as a *whole* because of the union.

Abū Rā'īṭah illustrates his approach with the examples of the man who is "blind" -- in his eyes, but not in his heart -- or the man who is cloven-headed (*mašġūġ*) -- in his head of course, not in his hand. So it is with God:<sup>(93)</sup>

... قُتِلَ ومات الرحيم لأوجاعنا، لإنقاذنا وخلصنا، بالجسد؛ كالأعمى  
والمشجوج، اللذين<sup>(1)</sup> كل واحد منهما موصوف أنه مفعول به ببعضه، واسم  
«العمى»<sup>(2)</sup> واقع على الإنسان بكماله.

(1) Ed. الذين. (2) Ed. العما (but corrected in notes).

#### TRANSLATION:

The Merciful One was killed and died *in the body* because of our pains, for our rescue and salvation. [This is] like a "blind" or a "cloven-headed" person, each of whom is described as the object of [the affliction] *in one of his parts*, the noun "blindness" or "cloven-headedness" being predicated of the person *in his entirety*.

Eustathius makes precisely the same points, giving the example of the man who is "blind" in his eyes but "clearsighted" (*baṣīr*) in his heart.<sup>(94)</sup> A century later this dialectic of the whole and its parts would be Yaḥyā b. 'Adī's chief weapon for responding to al-Warrāq's refutation of christological doctrine.<sup>(95)</sup>

In their defence of the paradox christology, arabophone Jacobite apologists such as Abū Rā'īṭah and Eustathius could and did use the favorite analogy of "Monophysite" christologians, which had already been used in Jacobite conversation with Muslims by John of Litarba: the mortal body and immortal soul of the one human person.<sup>(96)</sup> Abū Rā'īṭah expresses caution about its use: it is merely "an

91. See above, p. 236.

92. GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭa* (1951), 39–40 (#15).

93. Ibid., 40/8–10.

94. See Mingana chr. ar. 52, f. 157<sup>r</sup> v.

95. See below, p. 257.

96. John: in his brief Syriac apology, SUERMANN, "Jōhannān" (1988–89) and "Controverse" (1989), 171. Abū Rā'īṭah: in "The Apology for the Christian Religion," GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭa* (1951), 151 (#22). Eustathius: in the *Kiṭāb Uṣṭāṭ*, Mingana chr. ar. 52, ff. 155<sup>v</sup>–156<sup>r</sup>.

analogy, in some respects, to that for which there is neither analogy nor example."<sup>(97)</sup> And yet, whatever weaknesses in the analogy Melkite or Muslim polemicists might have found, in comparison with the Nestorian and Melkite analogies we have encountered the body/soul analogy has the virtue of illustrating the *oneness* of Christ who dies according to one aspect, yet is undying in another.

## B. Muslim Refutations

In a hadith report that circulated in Kūfah in the mid-eighth century it is stated that Christ's followers split into three groups: the Jacobites, who said "God (*Allāh*) was among us"; the Nestorians, who said "The Son of God (*ibn Allāh*) was among us"; and the Muslims, who said "A servant and apostle of God (*‘abd Allāh wa-rasūluhu*) was among us."<sup>(98)</sup> The hadith report is an early witness to Muslim awareness of Christian divisions, at least that between Jacobites and Nestorians. Indeed, for many early Muslim materials of ‘Irāqī provenance Christian divisions are seen as two-fold, largely because the Melkite presence there was not very pronounced. Even a writer such as ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, himself a former Christian, could for purposes of refutation treat Nestorians and Melkites together as "those who speak of indwelling and union."<sup>(99)</sup> In the works of two of ‘Alī's Muslim contemporaries, however, we find evidence of careful inquiry into the distinctive beliefs of Jacobites, Nestorians, and Melkites. al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm's non-polemical description of the beliefs of the three confessions, published many years ago by Di Matteo,<sup>(100)</sup> is well known to scholars, while Abū ‘Īsā al-Warrāq's even more detailed description has just recently been published.<sup>(101)</sup> And from a somewhat later period we have a description of Christian sects by the heresiographer al-Nāṣi' al-Akbar Abū l-‘Abbās ‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Anbārī.<sup>(102)</sup>

In his refutation of the Christians, al-Qāsim concentrated on the notion that God could have a Son. Both Abū ‘Īsā and ‘Abd Allāh, on the other hand, devote considerable space to Christian claims concerning the crucifixion of Christ. It is to their refutations that we now turn.

97. . . . قياس في بعض الأنحاء لما لا قياس له ولا مثل; GRAF, *Abū Rā'īta* (1951), 151/17–18.

98. ṬABARĪ, *Tafsīr* (1954–57), XXVIII, 92 (on *al-Ġum'ah* (61):14), discussed above at pp. 104 (note 41), 107–8.

99. من قال بالمساكنة (والحلول) والاتحاد, in *al-Radd ‘alā l-Naṣārā*, KHALIFÉ/KUTSCH, "Radd" (1959), 131/13, 22–23.

100. DI MATTEO, "Confutazione" (1921–22), 316/10–317/8 [IT 346–47].

101. PLATTI, "Doctrine" (1991), 23–27 [FT 9–14].

102. VAN ESS, *Häresiographie* (1971), 76\*–87\* (#17–51). The Nestorian-colored christology of what ‘Abd Allāh calls "the generality" of Christians is described at #18–19, Melkite christology at #31, and Jacobite christology at #36.

## 1. The refutation of Abū 'Īsā al-Warrāq

### (a) *Exploring Christian distinctions, exploiting Christian quarrels*

In Abū 'Īsā al-Warrāq's *Kitāb al-radd 'alā l-firaq al-ṭalāṭ min al-Naṣārā* ("The Book of the Refutation of the Three Sects of Christians") we find a polemic against the Christian confession of the crucifixion, death, and burial of Christ that is unique, among ninth-century texts in our possession, in its length and sophistication. This sophistication derives, first of all, from Abū 'Īsā's knowledge of the christological formulations of the different Christian communities and of their disagreements among themselves. We may get a sense of the extent of this knowledge from the paragraph on Christian claims concerning the death of Christ with which he concludes his introductory summary of Christian belief:<sup>(103)</sup>

These three sects [all] claim that Christ was crucified and killed, but differ, with respect to the crucifixion and killing, as to *whom* they in fact (*bi-l-ḥaqīqah*) befell, and *who* in fact was the one crucified.

The **Nestorians** claim that Christ was crucified from the standpoint of his humanity, not of his divinity (*min ḡihat nāsūtihi, lā min lāhūtihi*), and that the crucifixion and killing only befell the human born from Mary to the exclusion of God (*al-ilāh*), because killing and crucifixion and suffering do not reach God . . .

Many of the **Melkites** claim that the crucifixion and killing befell Christ in his entirety (*bi-kamālihi*) in that body, Christ in his entirety being the divinity and the humanity. And many of them say that Christ has two natures (*qū l-ḡawharayn*) of which one is the divinity and the other the humanity, but not as the Nestorians say, that he was only crucified from the standpoint of his humanity. The Melkites say: if Christ's humanity was a universal humanity (*nāsūt kullī*) without a hypostasis (*uqnūm*) or a person (*ṣaḥṣ*), it is not possible to isolate it in the crucifixion or in any other event, . . . which necessitates that the killing and crucifixion only befell Christ in his entirety.

And they say: if the divinity were isolated from the humanity and not united with it, then killing and crucifixion would not be possible for the divinity, nor could the hands of creatures grasp it.

And many of them claim that crucifixion, death, and suffering — all of that — only reached God (*al-ilāh*) . . . in his economy (*bi-l-tadbīr*), not by sense or by direct contact.

Most of the **Jacobites** claim that the crucifixion and killing befell Christ who is one nature from two natures. They say: if the crucifixion and killing only befell one of the natures, then the incarnation would be void and the union destroyed, and the crucifixion and killing would only befall that which was not Christ, because each of the two natures in isolation is not Christ.

In spite of this they say, "God (*al-ilāh*) was crucified for our sake, that is, in order to save us." . . . They do not by this mean to allow that crucifixion and killing befell the divinity, if it were in isolation and not united [with the humanity], but, in their view, that is only possible for it because of its union with the humanity . . .

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103. PLATTI, "Doctrine" (1991), 26–27 (#15) [FT 13–14].

Abū 'Īsā's description is not entirely accurate: as has already been pointed out, Melkites and Jacobites as well as Nestorians *did* say that Christ was crucified and died *bi-* or *min ḡihat nāsūtihi* (in or from the standpoint of his humanity), and not *bi-* or *min ḡihat lāhūtihi* (in or from the standpoint of his divinity). All the same, his description reflects considerable exposure to the christological terminologies and grammars of the three Christian communions, as well as to their quarrels among themselves.

It is in the second part of his refutation (i.e., his refutation of the doctrine of the Incarnation) that Abū 'Īsā turns his attention to the crucifixion, death, and burial of Christ, taking on each community in turn. He concludes that the Nestorians' strict distinction of two *ḡawhars* in Christ does not succeed in protecting the eternal *ḡawhar* from the death undergone by "Christ," who is the eternal *and* the temporal *ḡawhar* together.<sup>(104)</sup> As for the Melkites, their (neo-Chalcedonian) confession of Christ's one *divine* hypostasis results in the predication of birth, crucifixion, death, and burial to that hypostasis -- that is, to that which is *divine*.<sup>(105)</sup> And as for the Jacobites, the one *ḡawhar* of which they speak is not God *and* man, but *neither*.<sup>(106)</sup> In all of this there is an extent to which Abū 'Īsā appears to be exploiting the Christians' own intra-communal debate. His critique of the Nestorians comes directly from his report of *Jacobite* doctrine, reproduced above, while his critique of the Jacobites echoes, for example, Theodore Abū Qurrah's polemic against the Severan understanding of Christ's one nature as "composite."<sup>(107)</sup> Furthermore, we note that his judgements on the insufficiency of Nestorian and Melkite christological distinctions to "protect" Christ's divinity from the vicissitudes of his humanity meet with the approval of the Jacobite Yahyā b. 'Ādī (thanks to whose refutation al-Warrāq's text is preserved).<sup>(108)</sup>

#### (b) *Basic issues*

Abū 'Īsā's project is far more, however, than a turning of the Christians' own weapons against each other in the conviction that no one will emerge from the battle with an unrefuted argument. He brings to the debate his own convictions, which

104. PLATTI, *Incarnation* (1987), 27–28 (#21).

105. Ibid., 28–29 (#22). Abū 'Īsā attacks other Melkite christological concepts as well. For him, one whose temporal nature is that of *al-insān al-kullī* ("universal humanity") may not be seen or grasped -- or crucified, killed, and buried; *ibid.*, 79 (#69). Also, the addition of *bi-l-tadbīr* ("in his economy") to the confession that "God suffered" is, for Abū 'Īsā, a terminological avoidance tactic; *ibid.*, 75–78 (#68).

106. Ibid., 23 (#23).

107. See, for example, "On the Death of Christ," BACHA, *Mayāmir* (1904), 58/11–12: وجعل [سويرس] المسيح غير الابن الأزلي، وأدخله رابعاً تعبد مع الثالث، لا إله هو ولا إنسان ("and [Severus] made Christ other than the Eternal Son, and added him as a fourth [person of the Trinity], neither god nor man, to be worshipped with the third").

108. PLATTI, *Incarnation* (1987), 28–29 (#21–22).

stripped of their complex dialectical embellishments are in fact very simple. The bottom line is that *one may not predicate death of divinity* -- and Abū 'Īsā's arguments are designed to demonstrate that the Christians do just that. Fundamental for him is the conviction that we have already encountered in the work of 'Alī al-Ṭabarī, which for convenience we might call the "single predication rule": specifically divine and specifically human attributes may *not* be predicated simultaneously of one and the same subject. In describing Christ -- or anyone else -- there is a strict either/or. And thus Abū 'Īsā may ask: Is the crucified, dead, and buried Christ *alive* or *dead*?<sup>(109)</sup> Is he *God* or *not*?<sup>(110)</sup> As we noted before, this "single predication rule" is the precise *denial* of the Christian "paradox christology," for which it is perfectly legitimate to say that Christ is alive *and* dead, or that he is Creator *and* creature.

There is a perfect match between the either/or of the "single predication rule" and the dialectical tool of the *qismah* or *taqsīm* or dilemma-question,<sup>(111)</sup> and it is a characteristic of Abū 'Īsā's text that with unrelenting energy and ingenuity he poses one dilemma-question after another, seeking to drive any Christian opponent into a corner. While he himself admits that there is a certain artificiality in his procedure, as it leads him to postulate and refute doctrines that no one actually confesses, he explains that this is necessary in order to exhaust all the possibilities, so that "no one who holds to any one of [these Christian doctrines] will be able to do so (when the dialectic contained in this chapter presses upon him) without encountering the truth that prohibits him from holding to it."<sup>(112)</sup> It is in this implacable fashion that he addresses issues such as the sense of the confession "God died" (*al-ilāh māt*): if "God died," is He *now* dead or alive? If alive, did He raise himself, or did someone else? If someone else, was this one not a god, or a god? If a god, do you worship this one or the one who died? If the latter, does a dead god merit worship or not?<sup>(113)</sup> Through such a numbing barrage of dilemma-questions, Abū 'Īsā demonstrates -- to his own satisfaction, at least -- the incoherence of the christological doctrine of all the Christian communities.

A corollary of the "single predication rule" is what we might call (borrowing a term from arithmetic) the "distributive rule" of christological predication: if "Christ" is his divinity (*lāhūt*) and his humanity (*nāsūt*) together, then what is predicated of "Christ" must be predicated of *both* the *lāhūt* and the *nāsūt*. Therefore, to predicate crucifixion, death, and burial to Christ is necessarily to predicate these of both his

109. For example, *ibid.*, 32, 35 (#27–28, to all the communities).

110. For example, *ibid.*, 35–36 (#29–31, to the Nestorians).

111. On this device in the *kalām*, see VAN ESS, "Structure" (1970), especially 40–41.

112. ولن يقولوا بأكثر هذه التقاسيم، ولكن الاستقصاء لهم وعليهم في الكلام والشرح لهذه القصة ولما فيها أدى إلى ذكر هذه الوجوه. وأردنا أيضاً ألا يتعلّق منهم بشيء منها متى ضاق عليه الكلام في هذا الباب إلا وجد المحق ما يدفعه عن تعلّقه. PLATTI, *Incarnation* (1987), 66 (#56).

113. *Ibid.*, 40–42 (#36).

humanity *and his divinity*.<sup>(114)</sup> This rule is in obvious conflict with the Christian whole/parts dialectic, according to which one may predicate of Christ (and, for Jacobites, of "God") that which is predicated of him in one part or aspect, but not in another part or aspect.

A perusal of the oldest Christian reaction to Abū 'Īsā's arguments in our possession, that of Yaḥyā b. 'Adī in whose refutation these arguments are preserved, is useful for making clear how different are the theological grammars used by a Muslim and a Christian, each of whom may be described as a *mutakallim*.<sup>(115)</sup> Yaḥyā finds many of Abū 'Īsā's either/or dilemmas inadequate, sometimes describing them with the term *qismah nāqishah*, that is, a *qismah* or *taqsim* that fails to take all possibilities into account.<sup>(116)</sup> The neglected possibilities are provided through the dialectic of the whole and its parts, which Yaḥyā constantly invokes as a defence against and critique of Abū 'Īsā's arguments.<sup>(117)</sup> What the refutation of Abū 'Īsā and its refutation by Yaḥyā leave us with is a sense of the incompatibility of the grammars grown up in the service of the Qur'ān's and the Bible's ways of speaking about God and His dealings with human beings. The "single predication rule" and its corollary "distributive rule" of christological predication stand over against the "paradox christology" and the whole/parts dialectic used in its defence. At this level of debate there is little progress towards mutual understanding, because to a great extent the debaters are speaking different languages.

## 2. The refutation of al-Nāṣi' al-Akbar

In his work of heresiography, the *Kitāb al-awsaṭ*, al-Nāṣi' al-Akbar Abū l-'Abbās 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Anbārī gives brief, non-polemical descriptions of Nestorian, Melkite, and Jacobite christology. He notes that the Nestorians and Melkites divide (*qassama*) their speech with respect to the crucifixion and death of Christ, that is, that they distinguish between the humanity that dies and the divinity that does not die,<sup>(118)</sup> whereas the Jacobites, while in general agreement with other Christians, openly declare (in the interpolated *Trisagion* hymn) that "the Holy One who does not die was crucified in our stead."<sup>(119)</sup>

114. This is used at, for example, *ibid.*, 27–28 (#21, to Nestorians), 35 (#28, to all three communities), 37–40 (#32–35, to all three communities), 71 (#63, to Melkites).

115. Yaḥyā considered himself first and foremost a philosopher, but others saw him, with good reason, as a Christian *mutakallim*. See STROUSMA, "Tradition" (1991), 281–85.

116. PLATTI, *Incarnation* (1987), 73 (#65), 161–62 (#154).

117. *Ibid.*, 28/11 (#21), 30/4–5 (#23), 33/19–20 (#27), 37/9–10 (#32), 38/11 (#33), 39/9–10 (#34), 40/6–7 (#35), 42/17–18 (#36), 72/4–5 (#63), 73/17 (#65), 78/19 (#68).

118. VAN ESS, *Häresiographie* (1971), 77\* (#19), 79\* (#31).

119. صرّحت في تقدّيسها بالقول إنّ القديس الذي لا يموت هو صلب بدلنا; *ibid.*, 80\* (#36).

'Abd Allāh goes on to devote three brief but lucid paragraphs to a refutation of Christian claims concerning the death of the one confessed as God.<sup>(120)</sup> While the three paragraphs may be taken as very roughly applying to the Jacobites, the Melkites, and the Nestorians respectively, they are not three separate bits of *ad hoc* polemic but rather a single coherent argument that *all* these Christians use language that is either meaningless or blasphemous. 'Abd Allāh begins his refutation as follows:<sup>(121)</sup>

- 1 وَالَّذِينَ زَعَمُوا أَنَّ «الْبَارئِ» (جَلَّ عَمَّا قَالُوا!) «مَاتَ وَصُلِبَ وَدُفِنَ»:  
 2 إِنْ لَمْ يَدْلُوا بِهَذَا الْقَوْلِ عَلَى أَنَّ الْبَارئِ قَدْ نَالَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ مَا يَنَالُ مَنْ بِهِ  
 مِثْلُ ذَلِكَ، فَلَا وَجْهَ لِإِطْلَاقِ الْقَوْلِ! 3 وَإِنْ دَلُّوا عَلَى ذَلِكَ، فَغَيْرُ مُشْكُوكٍ فِي  
 أَنَّ مَنْ مَاتَ فَقَدْ بَطَلَ وَدَثَرَ، وَالْأَزَلِيُّ لَا يَجُوزُ عَلَيْهِ ذَلِكَ!

#### TRANSLATION:

1 [As for] those who claim that "the Creator" — may He be exalted above what they say! — "died and was crucified and buried": 2 if they do *not* intend by this statement that those things reached the Creator that reach another of whom the like of that is [said], then there is no reason for making the statement! 3 And if they *do* intend that, it is undoubtedly true that one who dies falls into nothingness and oblivion, and that is inconceivable for the Eternal One!

'Abd Allāh begins with the baldest of Christian theopaschite formulations, making a judgment that is the basis for his entire argument: *either* the intended meaning of "the Creator died" is something other than what is said, in which case the formulation is gratuitous and best dispensed with, *or* the formulation is a blasphemous and nonsensical attribution of death to the Divinity. In what follows, he will attempt to show that the christological distinctions made by Christians do nothing to blunt the force of this judgment.<sup>(122)</sup>

- 4 وَمَنْ اسْتَثْنَى مِنْهُمْ الْقَوْلَ، فَقَالَ، «بِجَهَةِ نَاسُوتِهِ»: 5 فَلَا بَدَّ لَهُ أَنْ  
 يَكُونَ أَفَادَ بِهَذَا الْقَوْلِ أَنَّ الْبَارئِ نَفْسَهُ قَدْ مَاتَ بِجَهَةِ مِنَ الْجِهَاتِ، فَمَا يَبَالِي  
 أَكَانَتْ تِلْكَ الْجَهَةُ جَهَةً نَاسُوتِهِ، أَوْ غَيْرَ جَهَةٍ نَاسُوتِهِ، إِذْ كَانَ هُوَ نَفْسَهُ الَّذِي

120. Ibid., 83\*-84\* (#45-47).

121. Ibid., 83\* (#45).

122. Ibid., 84\* (#46).

Van Ess points out that 'Abd Allāh's procedure here is the common one of dealing with the most readily refutable Jacobite ("Monophysite") teaching first, and then going on to show that Melkite and Nestorian distinctions are insufficient to escape the judgment passed on the Jacobites; *ibid.*, 89. We find the same procedure in 'Alī al-Ṭabarī's *al-Radd 'alā l-Naṣārā*, for example at KHALIFÉ/KUTSCH, "Radd" (1959), 131/12-133/6.

مات! 6 وقد نعلم أنَّ جميع ما يموت، فليس يموت من كلِّ جهة، لأنَّه ليس يموت بأن يذهب لونه، ولا بأن ينتقض جسمه. 7 من وجوه كثيرة لا يموت، وإنَّما يموت من الجهة التي يُفقد منها.

8 فليس لاستثناء الجهات<sup>7</sup> في الشيء<sup>(1)</sup> إذا مات وجهه، إذ كان ذلك ليس بمزيل عنه أن يكون قد مات. 9 أو لا يكون القول «إنَّ البارئ قد مات» مفيداً أنَّه مات بل غيره، فليس لذكره في الموت وجهه. 10 ولا شيء أبين من هذا.

(1) I have translated this as equivalent to شيء.

#### TRANSLATION:

4 And [as for] the one who qualifies the statement ["the Creator died and was crucified and buried"], saying "from the standpoint of His humanity" (*bi-ġihat nāsūtihi*) : 5 he necessarily means by this statement that the Creator Himself died from a certain standpoint; but it does not matter whether that standpoint is the standpoint of His humanity, or other than the standpoint of His humanity, if it was He Himself who died! 6 For we know that everything that dies does *not* die from every standpoint, because it does not die in such a way that its color fades or that its body disappears. 7 According to many aspects (*wuġūh*) it does *not* die. It only dies from the standpoint of that of which it is deprived.

8 Therefore, making qualifications [on the basis of] the [different] standpoints achieves nothing if an aspect did die, because that does not do away with the fact that He indeed died. 9 Or perhaps the statement "the Creator died" does not mean that He died, but something else; but then there is no reason for mentioning Him in [the context of] death. 10 Nothing is clearer than this.

‘Abd Allāh here takes on the whole/parts dialectic as applied to the death of God. The force of his critique may be appreciated by recalling Abū Rā’iṭah’s and Eustathius’ attempts to explain "God died" with the example of the man who is blind in his eyes, not in his heart.<sup>(123)</sup> In response to such attempts, ‘Abd Allāh would be quick to point out that, whatever qualifications be made, the *man* is *blind*! If such logic is to be applied to God, then "God died in his humanity, not in his divinity" does not change the fact that *God died*! And therefore the qualifications made by Christians do not affect ‘Abd Allāh’s judgment that the expression "God died" is either gratuitous or blasphemous.

The point of the Christian apologists, of course, was that just as the man’s heart was not blind, so Christ’s divinity did not suffer death. Their point was muddled, however, by their use of divine titles for Christ: "*Christ* died, from the standpoint of his human nature" is more straightforwardly analogous to "the man is blind, from the standpoint of his eyes" than is the formulation "*God* died." But

‘Abd Allāh will not allow Christians to get off his hook even in this way.’<sup>(124)</sup>

11 والَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ الْمَسِيحَ جَوْهَرَانِ وَقَتْنُومَانِ لِيَقْسَمُوا كَلَامَهُمْ  
فَيَقُولُونَ، «مَاتَ مِنْ جِهَةٍ نَاسُوتِهِ وَلَمْ يَمُتْ مِنْ جِهَةٍ لَاهُوتِهِ»، لَا يَخْرُجُونَ بِمَا  
فَعَلُوهُ مِمَّا يَلْزَمُ أَصْحَابَهُمْ. 12 لِأَنَّهُ، إِذَا كَانَ الْمَسِيحُ هُوَ الْبَارِئُ وَالْعَبْدُ  
جَمِيعًا، فَسَوَاءٌ كَانَا جَوْهَرَيْنِ أَوْ تَرَكَّبَا جَوْهَرًا وَاحِدًا، إِذَا قِيلَ «إِنَّ الْمَسِيحَ  
قَدْ مَاتَ»، لِأَنَّ<sup>(1)</sup> ذَلِكَ يُوجِبُ أَنَّهُمَا جَمِيعًا لِلذَّانِ لِحَقِّهِمَا الْمَوْتَ، إِنْ شَاءَا  
كَانَا وَاحِدًا، وَإِنْ شَاءَا كَانَا اثْنَيْنِ.

(1) Perhaps ‘Abd Allāh lost track of the structure of his sentence. فَنَ here would mark the following clause as the *ḡawāb al-šarʿ* (apodosis).

#### TRANSLATION:

11 And those who say that Christ is two natures and two hypostases so as to divide their speech, saying, "He died from the standpoint of his humanity, but did not die from the standpoint of his divinity," do not through this procedure evade the [negative judgments] that apply to their co-religionists. 12 This is because if Christ is Creator and servant together, then regardless of whether the two are two natures or are synthesized into one nature, if it is said "Christ died," that [understanding of Christ] requires that both together are what death befalls, whether they wished them to be "one" or to be "two."

According to ‘Abd Allāh, replacing "God died" by "Christ died" does not save the Christian case, because the attribution of death to Christ implies the attribution of death to his divinity, whether this is conceived (in Nestorian fashion) as a separate nature and hypostasis or (in Severan fashion) as a component of one synthesized nature. Thus, at the end of the argument, we have the same "distributive rule" of christological predication that we found in Abū Ḵsā al-Warrāq. In sum, ‘Abd Allāh’s verdict on the Christian doctrine of the death of one confessed as God is clear: it is either meaningless or blasphemous. The distinctions and dialectics used in its defence amount to no more than evasions.

### III. Christian Assertion and Self-Definition

In the previous section we examined the various ways in which Christians, drawing upon christological terminology and grammar and apologetic tactics forged in debate with one another, attempted to explain to Muslims their confession of the death of one confessed as Lord and God. These attempts at explanation were, for the

124. VAN ESS, *Häresiographie* (1971), 84\* (#47).

most part, conciliatory in tone. Through careful distinctions, dialectical devices, and readily comprehensible analogies they attempted to some extent to blunt the scandalous paradoxes of Christian speech, in order to show that these were not *really* quite as scandalous as might seem at first hearing.

Alongside these attempts at *explanation*, however, we find another moment and another mood: that of *assertion*, of letting the paradoxes of faith stand regardless of the scandal they might cause. In the present section we shall first present a sample of such "unapologetic apologetics," and a warning about the theological dangers involved in apologetics of the normal sort. This will be followed by a discussion of how unembarrassed confession of the death of the one confessed as God served the sociological function of demarcating the boundaries of the Christian community within the *Dār al-Islām*. Finally, we shall look at the way in which the major arabophone apologists strove to show how the very *scandal* of faith in the crucified Son of God could be – paradoxically! – a token of its *truth*.

## A. Asserting the Mystery

### 1. In "The Book of Eustathius" (*Kitāb Uṣṭāṭ*)

A good example of "unapologetic" -- some might say "naive" -- apologetics concerning the death of God the Son is the work of the Jacobite monk Eustathius, known simply as the *Kitāb Uṣṭāṭ*. This work responds to the letter of a Muslim who had attempted to dissuade Christians from "the worship of a god who was born and nursed, hungered and thirsted, tired, fled, feared, was beaten and crucified, called for help, died and was buried."<sup>(125)</sup> We have already seen that Eustathius uses some of the explanatory devices discussed above,<sup>(126)</sup> but on the whole his concern is less *explanation* than *reassertion* of the mystery of Christ as he is described in the Bible. Christ, while performing human actions, also surpassed human capacities:<sup>(127)</sup>

- 1 وقد فهم زمان مولده وعدد سنيه -- وهو الذي قال، «الحق الحق [f. 146<sup>v</sup>] أقول لكم، إن من قبل أن يكون إبراهيم، أنا هو».
- 2 ثم أنه جاع -- وهو الذي أشبع تسعة آلاف إنسان من اثنا عشر رغيفاً، سوى النساء والصبيان، وجمع من الفضلات<sup>١</sup> بعد الشبع تسعة عشر وعاءً. وهذا أيضاً مما يفوق الطبيعة.

125. ...عبادة إله قد ولد وأرضع وجاع وعطش وأكل وشرب وتعب وهرب وجزع وضرب وصُلب واستغاث ومات وقُبر; Mingana chr. ar. 52, f. 146<sup>r</sup>.

126. See above, pp. 251–53.

127. Mingana chr. ar. 52, ff. 146<sup>r</sup>–147<sup>v</sup>.

- 3 ثمّ عطش -- وهو الذي أروى أهل عرس قانا الجليل من الخمر الفائت من بعد نفاد خمرهم.
- 4 ثمّ تعب من المشي - وهو الذي مشي على المياه الهائلة، ومشى معه سمعان الصفا.
- 5 تعب من حمله صليبه - وهو الذي أمر المُدنف الذي أقام على سريره ثمانياً<sup>(1)</sup> وثلاثين سنة أن يحمل سريره ويمشي، فحمله من ساعته وانطلق إلى منزله معافى<sup>2</sup>.
- 6 وهرب ممّن كان في طلبه -- وهو الذي قال لجند رؤساء الكهنة، «أنا هو»، فسقطوا على الأرض على وجوههم جزعاً ورعباً منه.
- 7 وسمع الشتم وضرب - وهو الذي قال لإبليس، «اهرب عني [f. 147<sup>r</sup>] أيّها الشيطان»، فهرب منه، وما قدر أن يقف بين يديه. وجاءت<sup>(2)</sup> الملائكة فخدمته.
- 8 وصُلب مع لصّين، وعُدّ من المجرمين - وهو الذي غفر ذنوب الخاطئة التي دهنت بالطيب قدميه.
- 9 ومات كما يموت جميع الناس على ما شاهدته الأبصار -- وهو الذي أحيا العازر<sup>(3)</sup> وأقامه من الموتى<sup>4</sup> بعد أربعة أيام. وكان ذلك منه بقوله «قم»،<sup>(4)</sup> فقام.
- 10 وثُبر كجميع المقبورين - وهو الذي انفتحت<sup>5</sup> من أجله<sup>(5)</sup> القبور، وخرج منها من كان القديسين الموتى<sup>6</sup>، ودخلوا المدينة المقدسة.
- 11 ولما أن تُبر وعُدّ مع من كان ميتاً، وخُتم باب القبر الكيما أن لا<sup>(6)</sup> يتغيّر بعد ثلاثة أيام - وهو الذي أحيا ابن الأرملة وابنة القائد كهيتهم<sup>(7)</sup>، كأنّهم لم يموتوا، ولا تغيّر جسمهم.
- 12 فهذه الأسباب كلّها التي قد وصفناها، وما هو كثير مثل ذلك ممّا لم نذكره من جهة<sup>(8)</sup> الاختصار، [f. 147<sup>v</sup>] ممّا هو يفوق طباع الإنسان.

(1) MS ثمانية. (2) MS جاة. (3) MS العاز. (4) MS قوم. (5) MS منجله.

(6) MS sic. Better would be simply لتلا. (7) MS كهيتهم. (8) MS جهة.

#### TRANSLATION:

1 The time of his birth and the number of his years were known -- but it is he who said, "Truly, truly I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am." [John 8:58]

2 And again, he hungered -- but it is he who satisfied nine thousand men, apart from the women and children, with twelve loaves, and after they were satisfied gathered nineteen vessels of scraps. [Mark 6:32-44, 8:1-10 parr.] This is also something that surpasses [human] nature.

3 And again, he thirsted -- but it is he who gave the wedding party at Cana in Galilee surpassing wine to drink, after their wine had run out. [John 4:46-54]

4 And again, he tired from walking -- but it is he who walked upon the raging waters, and Simon "Cephas" walked with him. [Matthew 14:22-33]

5 He tired from carrying his cross — but it is he who commanded the sick man who had remained upon his bed for thirty-eight years to take up his bed and walk, and immediately he took it up and left for his home, healthy. [John 5:2–9]

6 He fled from those who sought him — but it is he who said to the soldiers of the chief priests, "I am he," and they fell upon their faces out of fear and terror of him. [John 18:3–6]

7 He heard insults and was beaten — but it is he who said to the Devil, "Flee away from me Satan!" and he fled from him, unable to stand before him. And the angels came and ministered to him. [Matthew 4:10–11]

8 He was crucified with two thieves, and was counted among criminals — but it is he who forgave the trespasses of the sinful woman who anointed his feet with perfume. [Luke 7:36–50]

9 He died as all people die, as far as sight could bear witness — but it is he who revived Lazarus and raised him from the dead after four days. And that was by his word "Arise!" and he arose. [John 11:38–44]

10 He was buried like all those who are buried — but it is he on whose account the graves were opened, and those who were the righteous dead came out of them and entered the Holy City. [Matthew 27:52–53]

11 When he was buried and counted among those who were dead, the door of the tomb was sealed lest he decay [lit. "change"] after three days — but it is he who raised the son of the widow and the daughter of the leader in their [own] form, as though they had not died and their bodies had not decayed. [Luke 7:11–17, 8:40–56 parr.]

12 All these occasions which we have described — and there are many [more] things like them which we have not mentioned for the sake of brevity — belong to that which surpasses the nature of the human being.

When Eustathius turns to a detailed response to the Muslim's objection to Christians' "worship of a god who . . . died," once again he stresses the *mystery* of this death, according to the New Testament.<sup>(128)</sup>

- 1 وأما قوله «مات»، فإنما الموت يكون على ثلاثة أنحاء:  
 (أ) إما بمشاهدة العيان، إذ كان الجسم بغير روح ولا حركة؛  
 (ب) وإما<sup>(1)</sup> هو المعنى بعينه، وهو [f. 152<sup>v</sup>] مفارقة النفس للجسم؛  
 (ج) وإما موت الخطيئة، كما قال الله (عز وجل) لآدم، «إِنَّ يَوْمَ تَأْكُلُ مِنْ هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةِ، مَوْتًا تَمُوتُ». 2 ولم يمت<sup>(2)</sup> آدم في ذلك اليوم، ولا مات إلا عند انقضاء عمره. وإنما عني<sup>(3)</sup> بذلك موت الخطيئة، لأنه قد صار في الحدّ الذي يحوي عليه الموت، لمخالفته أمر ربّه.
- 3 فيقال له: «بأيّ نحو من هذه الثلاثة أنحاء مات المسيح؟»
- 4 فإن قال، «مات بمشاهدة العيان»، يقال له: «قد رأينا من بعد موته قد خرج من جنبه الأيمن خاصّة دم وماء. وليس يكون ذلك من ميّت على ما تدركه الأفهام!»
- 5 فإن قال، «إنما مات بالمعنى بعينه، أي، مفارقة النفس للجسم»، فيقال له: «وكيف يكون هذا، ونحن نجدّه أنّه، لما صار في القبر، وُكِّلَ به،

وَحُرْس عليه، وَخُتِمَ الحجر الَّذِي عَلَى باب القبر. فنزل ملاك الرب فدحرج الحجر وجلس [f. 153<sup>r</sup>] عليه، ومن شدة ما دخل على الحُرَّاس من الفزع والرعب حين نظروا ملاك الرب، صار أولئك الحُرَّاس مثل الموتى.<sup>6</sup> ثم أتت<sup>(4)</sup> النسوة ببخور لبيخرن<sup>(5)</sup> القبر، فقال لهنّ ملاك الله: «لما<sup>(6)</sup> تطلبين الحيّ مع الموتى؟<sup>a</sup> ليس هو هاهنا. اذكرن كلامه معكنّ في الجليل، إذ قال إنّه عتيد أن يُسلّم ابن البشر بأيدي الناس الخطاة، ويُصلب، ويقوم في اليوم الثالث.» وإنهنّ ذكرن كلامه، ورجعن من القبر. 7 وهو أيضاً لا يقال<sup>7</sup> «في مَنْ<sup>(7)</sup> فارقتْ نفسه جسده على ما لا تدركه الأفهام.»

8 فأما موت<sup>a</sup> الخطيّة، فقد قال المسيح لليهود، «مَنْ منكم يقدر يوبّخني على خطيّة؟» وقال إشعياء قبل ذلك، «لم يوجد في فيه خطيّة.»

(1) MS لمن. (2) MS لبيخرون. (3) MS اعنى. (4) MS اتى. (5) MS يموة. (6) MS انما. (7) MS فيمن.

#### TRANSLATION:

1 Concerning his statement "[the worship of a god who] *died*," [know that] there are only three kinds of death:

(a) according to the witness of sight, when the body is without breath or movement;  
(b) or [according to] the proper meaning [of "death"], which is the separation of the soul from the body;

(c) or the death of sin, as when God (may he be ascribed strength and majesty!) said to Adam, "The day you eat of this tree you shall surely die" [Genesis 2:17]. 2 But Adam did not die that day, and did not die until the completion of his span of life. By that [saying] He specifically meant the death of sin, because he (Adam) had come to be within the bounds of one encompassed by death, as a result of his transgression against the commandment of his Lord.

3 Let it be said to him: "In accordance with which of these three kinds [of death] did Christ die?"

4 If he says, "He died according to the witness of sight," let it be said to him: "We have seen that, after his death, blood and water came out of his right side alone. And that is not something [characteristic] of a dead person, as far as intellects grasp the matter!"

5 And if he says, "He died according to the proper meaning, that is, the separation of the soul from the body," let it be said to him: "And how can this be? We find that, when he came to be in the tomb, people were put in charge over him and guards were posted over him and the stone at the door of the tomb was sealed. Then an angel of the Lord came down and rolled away the stone and sat upon it, and from the intensity of fear and terror that entered the guards when they saw the angel of the Lord, those guards became like dead men. 6 After that the women came to perfume the tomb with incense, and the angel of the Lord said to them, 'Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here. Remember his words with you in Galilee, when he said that the Son of Man was going to be delivered into the hands of sinful people and crucified, and would rise on the third day.' And they remembered his words, and returned from the tomb. 7 And this, too, is not said of someone whose soul has separated from his body, as far as intellects grasp the matter!"

8 And as for the death of sin, Christ said to the Jews, "Who among you is able to reproach me of sin?" [John 8:46] And Isaiah had previously said, "No sin was found in his mouth" [Isaiah 53:9].

This is a curious text, notably in its suggestion that Christ did *not* die in the sense of his soul being separated from his body – at least not in the normal human sense. This and the rest of Eustathius' presentation expose him to the charge that, on his own account, Christ did *not* die and the Qur'ān's *šubbiha lahum* is correct!<sup>(129)</sup> His point, however, is not to deny Christ's death, but to insist that this death is *not* to be explained by analogy with human deaths. Comparing the mystery of Christ's death to that of his birth, Eustathius insists: "He died in the way in which he willed to die, just as he was born as he willed to be born."<sup>(130)</sup> "How he died cannot be grasped."<sup>(131)</sup> "We do not define his death, just as we do not define his birth."<sup>(132)</sup> Rather than attempt to give explanations that the mind can grasp, Eustathius reasserts the mystery of Christ's birth, life, and death as described in the New Testament, wonderfully fulfilling the prophecies of the Old Testament.<sup>(133)</sup>

## 2. In *al-Ġāmī' wuḡūh al-īmān*

Probably a few years after the Jacobite Eustathius wrote his apology, the Melkite author of *al-Ġāmī' wuḡūh al-īmān* made an interesting protest against what he considered the abuse of the *lāhūt/nāsūt* distinction, both in his Chapter 10<sup>(134)</sup> and in the twelfth *waḡh* of his sharply polemical Chapter 14, entitled "On the Viewpoints that Exclude their Adherents from the Christian Community."<sup>(135)</sup> The author argues that a sharp distinction between Christ's humanity and divinity and a careful sorting of attributes and activities between them -- a standard feature of much "explanatory" apologetic, especially among Nestorians and Melkites -- is *not* strictly in accord with the Old Testament, the New Testament (including Jesus' own words), or the Fathers of the Church. Such sorting has only limited uses:<sup>(136)</sup>

فنقول «البشريّات لبشره، والإلهيّات<sup>(1)</sup> للاهوته الأعلى» وجه إفهام  
وتعليم لمن لم يحط<sup>(2)</sup> بتدبير الله [f. 43<sup>v</sup>] ومساغيه بالبشريّات علماً؛ أم  
إنكار على من<sup>(3)</sup> يلزم الله الكلمة الحاجة والأوجاع بجوهره. فمن وصف  
جوهرَي المسيح ربنا بخواصهما، كلّ جوهر بخواصه على أحده [sic]، إلا  
على أحد الوجهين اللذين ذكرناهما<sup>(4)</sup>، فقد حاد عن سبيل الرسل والأنبياء.

(1) MS إلهيات. (2) MS يحيط. (3) MS ما. (4) MS الذي ذكرنا.

129. Mingana chr. ar. 52, f. 155<sup>r-v</sup>. For Eustathius's response, see above, pp. 137–38.

130. إله مات بما شاء أن يموت، كما ولد كما شاء أن يولد; Mingana chr. ar. 52, f. 153<sup>v</sup>/7–8.

131. لا يدرك كيف مات; ibid., f. 154<sup>r</sup>/2–3.

132. فنحن لا نحدّ موته، كما لا نحدّ ولادته; ibid., lines 12–13.

133. On the importance of this last point for Eustathius, see above, pp. 123–24.

134. BL or. 4950, ff. 42<sup>r</sup>–46<sup>v</sup>.

135. القول في وجوه تخرج صاحبها من النصرانيّة; BL or. 4950, f. 76<sup>r</sup>. *Waḡh* 12 is found at ff. 81<sup>v</sup>–83<sup>v</sup>.

136. BL or. 4950, f. 43<sup>r-v</sup>.

## TRANSLATION:

And so we say "The human attributes and activities belong to the humanity, and the divine ones to the transcendent divinity" [for one of two reasons]: by way of instructing and teaching the person not thoroughly knowledgeable about God's economy and His ways among things human; or [by way of] rejecting anyone who would make need and pains attach to God the Word in His [divine] nature. Unless it is for one of the two reasons we have mentioned, whoever describes the the two natures of our Lord Christ with their characteristics [by describing] each nature by its characteristics *alone* has strayed from the path of the apostles and prophets.

Later the author mentions that the urge to such sorting of attributes and activities between Christ's divinity and his humanity may come in conversation with "another person belonging to the Church, *or with a stranger*."<sup>(137)</sup> In other words, the author recognizes the *ad hoc* apologetic utility of such sorting in conversations with Muslims (as well as with Christians whose faith had been challenged by Islam), and accords this sorting a certain limited legitimacy. All the same, with numerous citations from the Bible and the Fathers<sup>(138)</sup> he makes it clear that such sorting is foreign to the spirit of biblical and patristic christology. Efforts to soften the scandalous effect of the "paradox christology," whether through the use of analogies such as those Nestorian and Melkite ones we examined earlier, or through rigorous sorting of Christ's activities between his *nāsūt* and his *lāhūt*, may be apologetically *useful* in conversations with people "not thoroughly knowledgeable about God's economy and His ways among things human." The author of *al-Ġāmi'* would remind his readers, however, that they are not strictly *faithful* to the Church's story of those mysterious ways of God.

## B. Accomodation and Differentiation

### 1. Pressures to conform

During the first century of Muslim rule in what had been the Sassanian and eastern Byzantine empires, Christians, while expected to accomodate Muslim religious sensibilities in places where Christian and Muslim populations overlapped, did not experience a great deal of pressure to conform to a specifically Islamic ideology – in large part because that ideology itself was still in the making. As is well known, the earliest Muslim rulers did not encourage the conversion of non-Arabs to Islam; it was only under the "pious" Umayyad caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz (717-20) that converts could be exempted from the *ġizyah* (poll tax) levied on non-Muslims. Christian literature from the Umayyad period may see the rise of Islam as a punishment for sin

137. لغيره من أهل الكنيسة أم لغريب, BL 4950, ff. 81<sup>v</sup>–82<sup>r</sup> (from Chapter 14, *waġh* 12).

138. Throughout Chapter 10 and Chapter 14, *waġh* 12.

and/or an apocalyptic visitation,<sup>(139)</sup> but there is little sense in this literature of Islam as a serious *ideological* challenge to the Church. St. John of Damascus, who was in a better position to know Muslims well than many of his Christian contemporaries, regarded Islam (from the point of view of its teaching) as merely one of the latest in a very long series of heresies to have arisen and troubled the Church.

With the Abbasids' accession to power, however, pressures on Christians to accommodate themselves to various aspects of Islamic ideology increased. Most radically, *conversion* of Christians to Islam became an important feature of inter-religious dynamics at this time. It was the standard policy of the Abbasids to encourage conversion to Islam, both for ideological reasons and in order to redress what must have been perceived as an unacceptable demographic imbalance, with a Muslim minority ruling a Christian majority.<sup>(140)</sup> Converts were therefore accepted as full members of the Islamic community, with all the rights of members of that community, including exemption from the payment of *ḡizyah*. Several *genres* of Islamic literature that took shape under the Abbasids, including the *radd*-literature, are to be seen at least in part as missionary in purpose, with the goal of weaning non-Muslims away from their now-surpassed faiths and inducting them into the developing Islamic construct of reality.<sup>(141)</sup>

This Abbasid policy appears to have been a success, to judge from the demographic evidence in our possession. Richard Bulliet's statistical analyses of personal names in Islamic biographical dictionaries suggests that the beginning of "the great surge of Islamicization" in Iraq (probably closely paralleled by Syria and Palestine) begins at about the time of the accession to power of Hārūn al-Rašīd (786-809), and that within a century, over half of those who would eventually convert to Islam had done so.<sup>(142)</sup> It comes as no surprise that it is precisely this century in which we see the rise of an Arabic *Christian* apologetic literature aimed at strengthening Christians' resistance to the temptation of conversion.

We would quite naturally expect there to be a wide variety of motives among those Christians who converted to Islam, and indeed, the literary sources at our disposal reflect this. The author of *al-Ġāmi' wuḡūh al-īmān* was prepared to recognize the appeal of Islam's simplicity: "The language of this community [Islam] is a clear language, which ordinary people understand."<sup>(143)</sup> Such clarity would not only have posed a greater temptation to Christians than the "repugnantly subtle language" of earlier heresies,<sup>(144)</sup> but would prove attractive over against a Christianity struggling to find its voice in Islamically "loaded" Arabic. But while some Christians may have

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139. See, for example, SUERMANN, "Christen" (1983) and *Reaktion* (1985); MARTINEZ, "Apocalyptic" (1985).

140. See CHARFI, "Fonction" (1994), 46-47.

141. *Ibid.*, 46-49.

142. BULLIET, *Conversion* (1979), 82.

143. وكلام هذه الأمة كلام ظاهر يعرفها العامة; BL or. 4950, f. 5<sup>v</sup>/4-5.

144. كلام دقيق مستشنع; *ibid.*, f. 5<sup>v</sup>/4.

converted quite purely out of conviction of the superior coherence of Islam, others undoubtedly did so with an eye to social advancement for themselves and their families. It is doubtful that such converts underwent any great change of attitude or ideology upon joining the Islamic community. Naturally enough, those concerned about the integrity of that community saw the influx of nominal, under-"catechized" converts as a danger, leading, for example, to the complaint of al-Ġāḥiẓ: "Don't you see that the majority of those who were executed for heresy (*zandaqah*), of those who professed and made of a show of Islam, were those whose fathers and mothers were Christians?"<sup>(145)</sup> Charfi has recently described one of the most important functions of the Islamic *radd*-literature of the Abbasid period as precisely that of integrating new converts into the faith, thereby "protecting Islam from contamination."<sup>(146)</sup>

If some Christians responded to pressures to conform to the governmentally sanctioned and culturally ascendant Islamic ideology by actual conversion to Islam, others responded with *doctrinal accomodation* while remaining Christian, at least in name. In a series of recent articles analyzing passages in *al-Ġāmi' wuḡūh al-īmān*, Sidney Griffith has called our attention to the existence of an Islamicly enculturated, second generation Arabic-speaking group of people within the Christian community, who attempted to accomodate themselves doctrinally to Islam *without* taking leave of that community.<sup>(147)</sup> According to the author of *al-Ġāmi'* (who wrote, it will be recalled, around 867 A.D.), this accomodation took the form of "fleeing from the confession of the Triunity of God and of His Incarnation, because of what the strangers say to them in reproach."<sup>(148)</sup> For the author of *al-Ġāmi'*, such people are "hypocrites,"<sup>(149)</sup> "Christians in name only,"<sup>(150)</sup> "waverers."<sup>(151)</sup> It is with them in mind that he compiles (*ġm'*) the ways (*wuḡūh*) that lead to the true faith (*al-īmān*) in God's Triunity and His Incarnation.<sup>(152)</sup>

Similar complaints are heard in "On the Sufferings of Our Lord Christ," (poorly) preserved in Sinai ar. 553.<sup>(153)</sup> The anonymous author is moved to write because he has "found groups of our brethren mixing with foreign communities,"<sup>(154)</sup> who have "sought the praise of the passing world"<sup>(155)</sup> and who are being turned from their faith. Their specific form of accomodation to the "foreign communities" – it

145. ألا ترى أنَّ أكثر من قُتل في الزندقة، مِمَّنْ كان ينتحل الإسلام ويظهره، هم الذين آباؤهم وأمهاتهم نصارى؟ ŠARQĀWĪ, *Muḥtār* (1984), 87/12–13.

146. CHARFI, "Fonction" (1994), 48.

147. See especially GRIFFITH, "Kalām" (1990), with complete bibliography.

148. ...هرباً من التشهد بثلاث وحدانية الله وتأنسه لما يغيرهم به الغرباء; BL or. 4950, f. 6<sup>r</sup>/21–6<sup>v</sup>/1.

149. منافقون; *ibid.* f. 6<sup>v</sup>/5.

150. نصارا بسم فقط [*sic*]; *ibid.* f. 6<sup>v</sup>/7.

151. مذبذبين; *ibid.*, f. 7<sup>v</sup>/7.

152. See *ibid.*, f. 5<sup>r</sup>/4–5.

153. Sinai ar. 553, ff. 30<sup>v</sup>–44<sup>r</sup>.

154. *Ibid.*, f. 30<sup>v</sup>/15–16: قد وجدنا من إخواننا أقوام يخالطون الأمم الغربية.

155. *Ibid.*, f. 31<sup>r</sup>/1: وطلبوا مدح الدنيا الفانية البالية الزائلة.

later becomes clear that the author is speaking of the Muslims<sup>(156)</sup> -- was the denial of the simultaneous predication of divine and human activities to Jesus Christ.<sup>(157)</sup>

In the third place, we may mention the phenomenon of *accommodation in religious practice*. A particularly telling example of such accommodation is provided by the important work of Robert Schick, who recently studied the deliberate damage done to the images of persons and animals in church mosaics in Palestine during the first two centuries of Islamic occupation.<sup>(158)</sup> Far from confirming the ideas of those who desire to connect this damage to the iconoclastic edict of the Umayyad caliph Yazīd b. 'Abd al-Malik in 721,<sup>(159)</sup> Schick concludes that most of this damage was done *in the early Abbasid period by Christians*, who were typically careful in their work, effacing only the offending images and then repairing the mosaics, often with considerable artistic skill.<sup>(160)</sup> This wholesale removal of images by Christians is rather mysterious, but the likeliest interpretation is that it reflects some form of accommodation to the Muslim objection to the depiction of creatures in which there is the breath of life,<sup>(161)</sup> as well as to Jewish protests against image-making.<sup>(162)</sup>

Was it conviction or expediency that led Christians to remove images from their churches? Did they do away with portable icons as well as the fixed images in mosaic pavements? The evidence at hand for addressing such questions is limited, but that *some* Arabic-speaking Christians, at least, proceeded out of conviction and rejected portable icons as well as fixed images may be seen from the protest of Theodore Abū Qurrah in his "Chapters on Prostration to the Icons."<sup>(163)</sup> On the other hand, that icon-piety had by no means died out in Abbasid Palestine is shown by stories in which miraculous icons play a role, notably the account of the conversion and martyrdom of St. Anthony Ruwāḥ and the story of the icon of the crucified Christ which the Jews of Tiberias had had made. Abū Qurrah himself alludes to these

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156. See above, p. 131, for a text where the author quotes from the opponents' book: the Qur'ān.

157. Surprisingly, the author describes this as follows: *فيَقْرُونُ بِالْأَهْوِيَّاتِ [كُذًا] مِنْ أَعْمَالِ سَيِّدِنَا يَسُوعَ الْمَسِيحِ، وَيُنْكِرُونَ الْجَسَمَانِيَّاتِ* ("they affirm the divine activities of our Lord Jesus Christ, and deny the bodily ones"); *ibid.*, f. 31<sup>r</sup>/3-5. We would have expected the opposite.

158. SCHICK, "Fate" (1987). His results are presented in popular form in his "Life" (1988).

159. The standard study of this edict is VASILIEV, "Edict" (1956).

160. One of the most important pieces of evidence for Schick's dating is the damage to the mosaics at Umm al-Rasas, which can be dated to sometime after 785. See his summary and illustrative photographs in SCHICK, "Life" (1988), 218-21.

161. See GRIFFITH, "Tract" (1985), esp. 68-71.

162. For the evidence for the development of a wave of Jewish iconoclasm from the end of the fifth century, see FREY, "Question" (1934).

163. Ed. DICK, *Ikônes* (1986). Theodore's treatise, it should be emphasized, must be understood in the context that Schick's work illuminates rather than in terms of the struggle against Byzantine iconoclasm.

stories,<sup>(164)</sup> both of which are preserved in manuscripts of the tenth century.<sup>(165)</sup> And yet, there are surprising silences about the icons in the apologies of Abū Qurrah's Melkite theological successors. For example, when the author of *al-Ġāmi' wuḡūh al-īmān* turns his attention to Christian worship, it is for him the *aniconic* cross rather than the holy icons which play the role of focussing Christians' attention for prayer.<sup>(166)</sup> Similarly, the description of shrines commemorating the life of Christ and the witness of his apostles in *al-Burhān* of Bishop Peter of Bayt Ra's does *not* mention icons. It does mention the miraculous *mandylion* of Edessa, but, as Griffith points out, the author emphatically states that this is *not* something pictured, traced, or engraved.<sup>(167)</sup> Not all of Abū Qurrah's Melkite successors in the task of Arabic apologetics appear to have rushed to pick up his standard in the battle for the icons!

## 2. Drawing the boundaries

The reader will not have missed the fact that the literary evidence we possess for doctrinal and practical accomodation to Islam is contained in writings designed to combat that very accomodation. If many Christians saw in accomodation of one form or another a tactic for communal survival and/or personal advancement in a society in which Islam was politically and culturally dominant, others saw in this accomodation a threat to the Church, all the more dangerous because its spokesmen and activists came from *within* the Christian community. The Christians who saw accomodation as a threat understood it to be their duty to draw clear boundaries between that which was Christian and that which was not, defining the Christian community by those doctrines and practices most peculiar to it.<sup>(168)</sup> Thus Theodore Abū Qurrah argued for the *necessity* of venerating the icons, the logical outcome of the repudiation of this practice being the repudiation also of the principal mysteries of

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164. See *ibid.*, 173–74 (Ch. 16, #15–22).

165. "The Passion of St. Anthony Ruwah" (*GCAL* I, 524; NASRALLAH, *Histoire* (1988), 165–66; ed. and FT: DICK, "Passion" (1961)): Sinai ar. 513, ff. 363<sup>r</sup>–372<sup>v</sup>. "The Story of the Icon of Our Lord Christ which the Jews Mocked" (Syriac recension and ET in BUDGE, *History* (1899)): Sinai ar. 461, ff. 62<sup>r</sup>–88<sup>r</sup>. There was once a copy of the latter text in a manuscript written by Isaac of Mount Sinai, perhaps in 869 A.D., a fragment of which is preserved as Sinai NF perg. 1 (MEÏMARĒS, *Catalogue* (1985), 17\*–18\*).

166. Chapter 23, in BL or. 4950, ff. 166<sup>v</sup>–173<sup>v</sup>.

167. GRIFFITH, "Eutychius" (1982), esp. 182, commenting on the passage found in CACHIA, *Demonstration* (1960–61), I, 207 (# 384).

168. There has been some discussion recently of the role of doctrine as "social demarcation." See McGRATH, *Genesis* (1990), 37–52, with further references (in particular to the work of Niklas Luhmann).

the faith.<sup>(169)</sup> And as for the author of *al-Ġāmi' wuḡūh al-īmān*, he devotes his Chapter 14 to a list of doctrines and doctrinal "fudges" which *exclude* a person from being considered a Christian.<sup>(170)</sup> Bracketing the list are the failure to confess that *Allāh* is "Father, Son and Holy Spirit"<sup>(171)</sup> and the attempt to say that "Christ is God, but God is not Christ."<sup>(172)</sup>

It may be seen from the above discussion that a stand for the integrity of the faith could be taken on any number of practices or doctrines: the veneration of icons, the Triunity of God, the divinity of Christ. Very frequently, however, that which served to define and distinguish the faith of true Christian believers over against the Muslims, the Jews, and accomodationist Christians was *the crucifixion of the one confessed as Lord and God*. This becomes especially clear in two remarkable early ninth-century texts, by the Jacobite Abū Rā'īṭah and the Melkite Abū Qurrah.

(a) *Abū Rā'īṭah on the interpolated Trisagion hymn*

We begin with what might seem an unpromising field in which to seek elucidation of Christian-Muslim dynamics under the Abbasids: the controversy between Chalcedonian and "Monophysite" Christians over the *Trisagion* hymn, "Ἁγίος ὁ Θεός, ἅγιος Ἰσχυρός, ἅγιος Ἀθάνατος, ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς ("Holy God, holy Mighty One, holy Deathless One, have mercy upon us.")'. Some years after the Council of Chalcedon the anti-Chalcedonian patriarch of Antioch, Peter the Fuller (patriarch 468-88), had interpolated the words ὁ σταυρωθεὶς δι' ἡμᾶς ("who was crucified for us") before "have mercy upon us." Chalcedonians saw the interpolation as a heretical attribution of death to the Holy Trinity, but for Chalcedon's Cyrillian opponents -- who usually took the hymn as addressed to *Christ* -- the hymn was a powerful repudiation of the "Nestorianizing" tendencies they perceived in the two-nature terminology of Chalcedon. And thus in its interpolated form the *Trisagion* became "a touchstone of Monophysite orthodoxy."<sup>(173)</sup>

The argument that had been joined in Greek was continued in Arabic between no less celebrated theologians than Theodore Abū Qurrah and Ḥabīb b. Ḥidmah Abū Rā'īṭah. Toward the year 815, Abū Qurrah was in Armenia preaching Chalcedonian orthodoxy, and had attacked the interpolated form of the *Trisagion* hymn. Abū Rā'īṭah, though unable to respond to the invitation of the Armenian regent Ashot

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169. Theodore makes this point at the very beginning of his treatise on the icons: DICK, *Icons* (1986), 90-94 (Ch. 2).

170. See p. 265 (note 135) above.

171. *Waḡh* 1, BL or. 4950, f. 76<sup>r</sup>.

172. *Waḡh* 16, *ibid.*, ff. 86<sup>r</sup>-88<sup>v</sup>.

173. FRENCH, *Movement* (1972), 168.

Smbāt to come and debate Abū Qurrah in person,<sup>(174)</sup> drafted letters which have been preserved. In one of them, he addresses the Armenian regent as follows:<sup>(175)</sup>

وقد يجب علينا، أيها السيد، أن نشرح غرضنا ومذهبنا  
 في تقديسنا الله مراراً ثلثاً،  
 وإضافتنا إليه الصلب المنقذ لنا،  
 تنبيهاً للمؤمنين وفخراً،  
 وتبكيثاً لأصحاب البدع والتخرص.  
 تقديسنا الله، أيها السيد، تقديساً خاصاً  
 يليق بأهل هذه الدعوة الثانية المباركة،  
 وبه تكون مُمَيِّزة بين أهلها  
 وبين جميع الملل المخالفة لها.

TRANSLATION:

It is incumbent upon us, my Lord,  
 that we explain our aim and way [of thinking] with regard to  
 our threefold attribution of holiness (*taqdīs*) to God,  
 and our adding to it [the mention of] the crucifixion  
 that saves us,  
 bringing the believers to awareness and pride  
 (*tanbīhan li-l-mu'minīn wa-faḥran*),  
 and bringing the adherents of heresies and calumny  
 to silence.  
 Our *taqdīs* of God, my Lord,  
 is a *taqdīs* which is particularly appropriate  
 to the people of this blessed New Call,<sup>(176)</sup>  
 by which it distinguishes (*mumayyizah*) between its  
 people and all religious communities differing from it.

Abū Rā'iṭah points out that the names by which God is invoked in the New Testament differ from those of the Old Testament; just so, the names by which orthodox Christians address God in their prayers and praise will differ from those of other religious communities. He goes on:<sup>(177)</sup>

174. Abū Rā'iṭah was in prison at the time. He sent his theologian nephew, the deacon Nonnus of Nisibis, in his place.

175. GRAF, *Abū Rā'iṭa* (1950), 76 (#5).

176. I.e., the New Covenant.

177. Ibid., 76/12–15.

فلو أنّ تقديسنا، أيّها المؤمن الفاضل، وصلواتنا  
 كانت باسم الله القدوس  
 من غير أن تختتم بذكر<sup>(1)</sup> الصليب  
 (المضاف إليه من المؤمنين الصادقين)،  
 لما فرّق ذلك بينهم  
 وبين اليهود  
 وبين أهل التيمن!  
 فكلّ مقدّس لله في نفسه،  
 مراراً ثلاثاً، وأكثر من ذلك، وأقلّ.

(1) Ed. ذكر.

#### TRANSLATION:

If, O noble believer, our *taqdīs* and our prayers  
 were [only] "in the name of the Holy God,"  
 without closing with the mention of the crucifixion  
 (added to it by the true believers),  
 that would not differentiate (*faraqa*) between them  
 and the Jews  
 and the "People of the South!"  
 For everyone attributes holiness to God in himself,  
 [whether] three times, or a greater number, or fewer.

In Abū Rā'īṭah's usage, the "People of the South" (*ahl al-tayman*) are the Muslims.

Abū Rā'īṭah's point in all of this, of course, is polemical. For him, the *taqdīs* of Abū Qurrah and the other Chalcedonians is insufficiently differentiated from that of *any* of the other Near Eastern religions and sects. They *all* worship a chief deity, described as God/ess, Holy, Undying; *but not crucified*. As for orthodox Christians:<sup>(178)</sup>

وتقديس المؤمنين المخلصين، أيّها السيّد،  
 إذاً مراراً ثلاثاً؛<sup>(1)</sup>  
 وإلحاقهم «الصليب» به  
 مخالفٌ تقديس كلّ ملة حائدة معاندة للحقّ أو بدعة.

(1) Ed. ثلثة.

## TRANSLATION:

The *taqdīs* of the saved believers, my Lord,  
 is, in this case, threefold;  
 and their joining [the mention of] the crucifixion to it  
 sets it at variance from (*muḥālif*) the *taqdīs* of every  
 community that turns aside from and resists the truth,  
 and [of every] heresy.

Using a variety of lexical items (*mumayyizah bayn, faraqa bayn, muḥālif*) to express the notion of differentiation, Abū Rā'īṭah stresses the necessity that the orthodox Christian invocation of God be *different* from that of other religious communities. While he does not say so explicitly, in his time and place he must have had the Muslims especially in view, even if he could also point to Jewish, Manichaean and Zoroastrian communities. Now, that which best succeeds in distinguishing the Christian invocation of God from that of all these other communities is the public, liturgical mention of *His crucifixion*. Through this mention the believers are alerted to whom they are and where the boundaries of their community are to be drawn. They are invited to *boast* or *glory*<sup>(179)</sup> precisely in that which other religious communities find scandalous, and which therefore is the mark of their particularity.

(b) *Abū Qurrah on the icons of Christ crucified*

While the loyal Chalcedonian theologian Abū Qurrah was inevitably opposed to Abū Rā'īṭah in the matter of the *Trisagion* addition, he believed as firmly as Abū Rā'īṭah that the Christian community was to be clearly marked off from the surrounding religious world, and that faith in the crucified Christ, confessed as Lord and God, was the marker. For Abū Qurrah, the means of demarcation was not the liturgical use of the *Trisagion* addition, but rather the unashamed *veneration of the icon of Christ crucified*.

This may be seen from the climactic chapter of his "Chapters on Prostration to the Icons."<sup>(180)</sup> Abū Qurrah begins the chapter by setting out the paradoxical character of Christian worship: Christians render homage to Christ by their prostration to his icon, and especially do they render him *homage* when they picture him as *scandalously* crucified!<sup>(181)</sup> There follows a little allegory of a king who was taken and mistreated by his enemies. Most of his followers fell away, but some, in the sincerity of their love, remained. Abū Qurrah continues:<sup>(182)</sup>

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179. Words of the root *fḥr* are important in this connection, both in Christian exhortation (such as Abū Rā'īṭah's, above; or Abū Qurrah's, below) and in incredulous Muslim description of Christian belief (e.g., pp. 243–44 above).

180. DICK, *Icons* (1986), 212–18 (Chapter 24).

181. *Ibid.*, 212 (#1–2).

182. *Ibid.*, 214 (#12–14).

وأعداؤه يعيرونهم، قائلين لهم:  
«وَيَحْكَمْ! ما تستحون أن يكون هذا ملكاً لكم؟»  
ثم يصيح هؤلاء بأعلى أصواتهم مفتخرين:  
«ألا ليس لنا ملك ولا سيّد ولا قرّة عين غير هذا!»  
فصُلبوا معه كذلك،  
يحملون عاره،  
ويشاركونه في أوجاعه،  
حتى قضى تدبيره اللطيف،  
ورجع إلى ملكه ونعيمه وبهائه.

#### TRANSLATION:

His enemies mocked them, saying:  
"Woe to you! Are you not ashamed to have this man  
as your king?"  
Then those cried out at the top of their voices, boasting:  
"Truly we have no king, no lord, and no delight other  
than this man!"  
And so they likewise were crucified with him,  
bearing his shame  
and sharing in his pains,  
until he accomplished his subtle design,  
and returned to his kingship, comfort, and splendor.

Abū Qurrah then applies this transparent allegory to the icons of the crucified Christ:<sup>(183)</sup>

وكذلك نحن النصارى،  
إذا صوّرنا المسيح في كنائسنا مصلوباً مفضوحاً،  
فأبصره غيرنا، قائلين لنا:  
«ويحكم! ما تستحون من أن هذا إلهكم؟»  
قلنا نحن بأعلى أصواتنا:  
«نعم، هذا مخلصنا ورجاؤنا وسرورنا!»

## TRANSLATION:

And likewise we, the Christians,  
 if in our churches we depict Christ scandalously crucified,  
 and others [who are not Christians] notice him,  
 saying to us:  
 "Woe to you! Are you not ashamed  
 that this is your God?"  
 then we say at the top of our voices:  
 "Yes, this is our savior, our hope, and our delight!"

This loyalty is like that of the martyrs, who boasted in the cross of Christ before kings, and it earns the same reward they earned. On the other hand, to be embarrassed at the icon of the crucified Christ is to lose everything, no matter how much one has suffered otherwise for the sake of Christ.<sup>(184)</sup>

Before the end of the treatise there is an objection:<sup>(185)</sup>

وإن قال قائل:  
 «إن البرانيين قد يعيروننا بصليب المسيح  
 من غير أن يروا هذه الصور!»،  
 فليعلم هذا أن الداخلين كنائسنا من أولئك،  
 لو لم يكن في كنائسنا هذه الصور،  
 لكان أكثرهم لا يخطر على قلوبهم ما قد ذكرنا.  
 فأما الصور، فهي التي تشهيهم أن يعيروننا!

## TRANSLATION:

If someone says:  
 "The 'outsiders' may mock us because of the cross of Christ  
 without seeing these icons!"  
 let him know concerning those ["outsiders"]  
 who enter our churches,  
 that if these icons were not present in our churches,  
 it would not occur to most of them to react  
 in the way we have mentioned.  
 As for the icons, they are what entices them to mock us!

Remarkably, Abū Qurra assumes that it is a positive blessing for Christians that the "outsiders" mock the Christians for their faith in the crucified Christ. For him, the icons of the crucifixion are *necessarily* present. They stand in the churches and provoke a crisis: for the "outsider," the usual reaction is rejection and mockery

184. Ibid., 215 (#21–23).

185. Ibid., 216 (#26–28).

(although faith can also result, as in the case the blind Jew Ananias),<sup>(186)</sup> while for the Christian, the mockery provoked by the icon provides the acid test of faith, a test which is a sharing in the sufferings of the martyrs.

We have seen, then, that an important element in the Arabic Christian response to pressure to conform to Islamic ideology was the bold and uncompromising assertion of the particularities of the Christian faith, especially at the point at which the paradoxes of the faith were most sharply experienced as scandal: the crucifixion of Christ, confessed as Lord and God. While pressures to accommodate Islamic sensibilities and to conform to Islamic ideology tended to blur the boundaries of the Christian community, the assertion of the crucifixion of *God* served (at least for Jacobites and Melkites) to re-delineate the boundaries, and to call Christians to a renewed sense of identity over against those on the other side.

### C. Scandal Transformed into Proof

#### 1. On the true religion

One of the most important *loci* in the controversial literature arising from the Muslim-Christian-Jewish encounters of the early 'Abbasid period is that which we may label "On the true religion."<sup>(187)</sup> Christian apologists adopted a variety of approaches to this subject. From the time of the very earliest Christian-Muslim debates, as far as we can tell, they identified *fulfilled prophecy* and *evidentiary miracles* as positive signs by which the true religion might be discerned, and tacitly or explicitly called the prophethood of Muḥammad into question because of their absence in his career.<sup>(188)</sup> That the Christian argument was not without effect is clear from the response of Muslim apologists, who sought out prophecies of Muḥammad in the Christian scriptures,<sup>(189)</sup> worked out their own sets of criteria for discerning the true prophet, and developed the doctrine of *i'ğāz al-Qur'ān*, the inimitability of the Qur'ānic speech, proposed as Islam's unsurpassable evidentiary miracle.<sup>(190)</sup>

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186. Related in "The Story of the Icon of Our Lord Christ which the Jews Mocked." See note 165 above.

187. On this *locus* see GRIFFITH, "Religion" (1979) (a good general introduction); SAMIR, "Liberté" (1980–81), 97–121; STROUSMA, "Signs" (1985); GRIFFITH, "Faith" (1992).

188. See, for example, the apposite passages in the Timothy–al-Mahdī debate: conveniently, PUTMAN/SAMIR, *Église* (1975), 21\*–23\* (#92–101, on the witness of the prophets) and 27\* (#130–33, on evidentiary miracles).

189. See above, p. 127, note 167.

190. See STROUSMA, "Signs" (1985), 106–9. Strousma's helpful article also discusses Jewish contributions to the Arabic debate.

A positive criterion for discerning the true religion in addition to fulfilled prophecy and evidentiary miracles is advanced in what is probably one of Theodore Abū Qurrah's earliest writings, "On the Existence of the Creator, and the True Religion."<sup>(191)</sup> For the young Abū Qurrah, the true religion is that which possesses doctrines "in accord with what one might rationally conclude to be the truth, from an honest consideration of the existential requirements of human nature."<sup>(192)</sup> It is not the body of this treatise that best represents the Arabic Christian apologetic mainstream, however, but its Appendix,<sup>(193)</sup> where the crux of the argument is not the presentation of the *positive* criteria that indicate the *true* religion, but rather the *negative* reasons for which a person might choose a religion *other* than the true one.

In this Appendix to "On the True Religion," Abū Qurrah summarizes the reasons for which people might decide to adopt the religion of one of its propagandists: he might constrain them to do so by the sword; he might grant them worldly wealth, power, and status; he might give scope to their worldly passions; or he might present to them a theology that the minds of ordinary people find attractive (*tastahsinuhā 'uqūlu l-'āmmah*) or familiar.<sup>(194)</sup> We note that each item in his list corresponds to well-known Christian charges against Islam, which is clearly the religion that Abū Qurrah has chiefly in mind.<sup>(195)</sup> He goes on to argue that *none* of these reasons can account for the acceptance of Christianity at the hands of the apostles, men without status, possessions, strength, or learning<sup>(196)</sup> who called their hearers to asceticism<sup>(197)</sup> and to "a new and strange matter" that their "fleshly" minds did *not* find attractive, namely, *the birth, rejection, suffering, crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of the one who is God and Son of God, the sole Redeemer*.<sup>(198)</sup> Since Christianity was not accepted for any of the reasons just mentioned, the secret of its undisputed spread must lie elsewhere: namely, in the *evidentiary miracles* that accompanied its preaching,<sup>(199)</sup> archetypically the raising of

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191. Its modern editor, Ignace Dick, dates the work to about 780; DICK, *Créateur* (1982), xxviii. In what follows, I shall abbreviate the title to "On the True Religion."

192. GRIFFITH, "Faith" (1994), 20.

193. DICK, *Créateur* (1982), 259–70 (Chapter 16). This is in effect a separate little treatise, and its ideas are sufficiently in tension with those of "On the True Religion" to raise the question of whether they were written at the same time or whether their amalgamation is a secondary development.

194. *Ibid.*, 260 (#3–7).

195. Later analyses are formulated so as to discredit Judaism (and other religions) as well as Islam. See the lists below, and note especially the addition of *al-ta'aṣṣub*, racial/tribal/group solidarity, which could be understood as explaining the religious adherence of both the Arabs *and* the Jews.

196. DICK, *Créateur* (1982), 262–63 (#14–18).

197. *Ibid.*, 263 (#19).

198. *Ibid.* 263–64 (#20–23).

199. *Ibid.*, 264–65 (#24–28).

the dead "in the name of Jesus Christ, crucified in Jerusalem."<sup>(200)</sup>

We would do well to pause and ponder the audacity of the argument. Abū Qurrah was keenly aware that Muslims (and Jews) found Christian teaching, especially that of the crucifixion of the one who is God and Son of God, to be scandalous. He himself reports some vivid epithets that could be flung at the Christians' belief: it is "folly,"<sup>(201)</sup> "an abomination,"<sup>(202)</sup> so senseless that "the delirium of sleep is more to the point than their speech."<sup>(203)</sup> But in the Appendix to "On the True Religion" he *incorporates* the sense of scandal and repulsion aroused by this "abominable, delirious folly" into an argument for its truth: this folly is such a stumbling-block for the human mind that only *divine* authentication can account for the observable fact that people throughout the world, wise and ignorant and those in between, believe it! And to give this dialectic of paradoxicality one final twist, Abū Qurrah points out that it is not just *any* sort of divine demonstration that authenticates the Christian religion, but specifically the miracle of raising the dead *in the name of the Crucified*. Abū Qurrah emphasizes this point in "On the Confirmation of the Gospel":<sup>(204)</sup>

ولم يكن يقول للميت إنَّ  
«قُمْ باسم الله»،  
ولكن كان يقول له،  
«يا ميت،  
لك أقول باسم يسوع الناصري،  
الذي صلبه اليهود في أورشليم،  
قُمْ!»  
فكان الميت يقوم في ساعته.

#### TRANSLATION:

And they [the apostles] did not say to the dead person,  
"Rise in the name of God (*bi-smi -llāh*)!"  
but rather they said to him,

200. Ibid., 269 (#48); similarly Abū Qurrah's "On the Confirmation of the Gospel" (see the next paragraph), and in the *Masā'il wa-ağwibah 'aqliyyah wa-ilāhiyyah*, Sinai ar. 434, f. 178<sup>r</sup>. In Abū Qurrah's Greek *opusculum* 21, by contrast, the evidentiary miracle mentioned is the healing of a *blind* man "in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who was born of Mary in Bethlehem, fled into Egypt, was seized by the Jews, hung on a tree, given vinegar and gall to drink, whose side was wounded with a lance, and who was buried in the tomb"; PG 97, 1552BC.

201. حَقَق; in "Chapters on Prostration to the Icons," DICK, *Îcônes* (1986), 94 (Ch. 2, #16).

202. شَنَعَ; in "On the Law and the Gospel and the Chalcedonian Faith," BACHA, *Mayāmir* (1904), 147/15.

203. هَذَا يَأْنِي النُّومُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَى السَّدَادِ مِنْ كَلَامِهِمْ; in "Chapters on Prostration to the Icons," DICK, *Îcônes* (1986), 92 (Ch. 2, #11).

204. BACHA, *Mayāmir* (1904), 74/16–19.

"Dead one,  
I tell you in the name of Jesus of Nazareth,  
whom the Jews crucified in Jerusalem,  
rise!"

And the dead person rose immediately.

Thus is the paradox of the crucifixion of the one who is God and Son of God built into both the negative and the positive moments of the argument.

We do not know whether or not Theodore Abū Qurrah was the first to formulate this procedure for discerning the true religion through an analysis of the natural human motives for adopting a religion, and an examination of the available religions in the light of this analysis. He may well deserve this distinction, especially if the Appendix to "On the True Religion" is indeed one of Abū Qurrah's earliest works. Whatever its origins, the procedure quickly became part of the standard apologetic arsenal of arabophone Christians of every confessional community, as we see from its use in the writings of Abū Qurrah's contemporaries Ḥabīb b. Ḥidmah Abū Rā'īṭah,<sup>(205)</sup> a Jacobite,<sup>(206)</sup> and 'Ammār al-Baṣrī,<sup>(207)</sup> a Nestorian.<sup>(208)</sup>

These apologists did not develop one fixed list of natural human motives for adopting a religion. In addition to the list found in the Appendix to "On the True Religion," Abū Qurrah gives another one in "On the Confirmation of the Gospel," where four doubtful motives for adhering to a religion are named: (1) *al-raḥṣ* (license); (2) *al-'izz* (strength); (3) *al-ta'aṣṣub* (ethnic solidarity); and (4) *qunū' al-'aql al-sūqī* ("the ready persuasion of the mercantile mind").<sup>(209)</sup> In "The Apology for the Christian Religion," Abū Rā'īṭah lists six motives: (1) *raḡbah fī l-'āḡil* (desire with respect to this world); (2) *ṭama' fī l-'āḡil* (ambition with respect to the world to come); (3) *rahbah qāhirah* (coercing fear); (4) *ruḡṣah fī kulli maṭlūb min al-maḥzūrāt* (license with respect to desired but forbidden things); (5) *istiḥsān li-tanmīqihi wa-zahrafatihi* (reasoned approval of aesthetically appealing teachings); (6) *tawāṭu' wa-'aṣabiyyah, wa-l-wuṣūl ilā l-'izz wa-l-quḍrah wa-l-ṭarwah wa-l-nuṣrah* (collusion and ethnic solidarity for the purpose of group advancement).<sup>(210)</sup> 'Ammār makes a variety of lists of what he calls "worldly motives" (*asbāb al-dunyā*), the most comprehensive of which includes: (1) *al-tawāṭu'* (collusion); (2) *al-sayf* (the sword); (3) *al-raḡā'ib min*

205. See "The Apology for the Christian Religion," GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭah* (1951), 131–140 (#1–12); and "On the Truth of Christianity," SAMIR, "Liberté" (1980–81), 100–1.

206. See also the Syriac apologetic treatise of Abū Rā'īṭah's nephew Nonnus of Nisibis, which includes a passage proving Christianity to be the true religion; VAN ROEY, *Nonnus* (1948), 29\*–32\* [LT 64\*–67\*].

207. See both the *Kitāb al-burhān*, Chapters 2–3 (HAYEK, *Apologie* (1977), 24\*–41\*) and the *Kitāb al-masā'il wa-l-aḡwibah* II, 6–14 (ibid., 135\*–47\*).

208. See also the response of the Nestorian Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq (as well as that of the Melkite Quṣṭā b. Lūqā) to the letter of Ibn al-Munaḡḡim in SAMIR/NWIYA, "Correspondance" (1981).

209. BACHA, *Mayāmīr* (1904), 71.

210. GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭah* (1951), 131–32 (#2).

*al-amwāl wa-l-ri'āṣah wa-l-'izz* (objects of desire such as wealth, authority, and strength; 'Ammār also refers to this item as *al-riṣa wa-l-muṣāna'ah*, bribes and flattery); (4) *al-aṣabiyyah* (ethnic solidarity); (5) *al-istiḥsān* (reasoned approval of plausible teachings); (6) *al-tarḥīṣ fī l-ṣarā'i* (license with respect to laws); (7) *ḥayālāt min al-siḥr wa-ṣubahātihi* (the illusions and specious proofs of sorcery).<sup>(211)</sup> But despite the differences in detail, a cursory examination confirms that the various lists all cover much the same ground. Coercion, license, the pursuit of wealth and power, and ethnic collusion and solidarity are everywhere listed.

We notice in particular that the motive which Abū Qurrah described in the Appendix to "On the True Religion" as the presence of a theology that the minds of ordinary people find attractive (*tastaḥsinuhā*) (and which he later labelled "the ready persuasion of the mercantile mind") is found in Abū Rā'īṭah's and 'Ammār's presentations with the label *al-istiḥsān*. This term was used in early Islamic legal theory, where it refers to decision-making by means of personal deliberation. Here the term may be explained as a reasoned approval of doctrines that strike one as rationally plausible and/or aesthetically appealing.<sup>(212)</sup> In each and every case in which this motive is listed, the apologist goes on to insist that the acceptance and spread of Christianity has nothing whatever to do with *al-istiḥsān*, since its teachings -- in particular, *the crucifixion of the Son of God* -- move the mind to scandalized disbelief rather than to reasoned approval! Abū Rā'īṭah formulates the argument sharply and artistically:<sup>(213)</sup>

وأما القسم الخامس،  
الذي هو الاستحسان لتنميته وزخرفته،  
فذلك أيضاً غير جائز في شريعة الإنجيل:  
لأن المقصود بالعبادة،  
المطلوب بالديانة،  
المدخر للعاقبة،  
المرجو المكافأة،  
المعتمد عليه في الدنيا والآخرة،  
رجل مصلوب،  
ضعيف الظاهر، مهين المنظر بين صالبيه،  
وتلقّيه إياه بكلّ نكال أوجب موته ودفنه.

211. From the *Kitāb al-burhān*, HAYEK, *Apologie* (1977), 31\*-39\*.

212. 'Ammār stresses rational plausibility in the *Kitāb al-burhān* (HAYEK, *Apologie* (1977), 36\*), and aesthetic appeal in the *Kitāb al-masā'il wa-l-aḡwibah* (ibid., 136\*, 138\*). Abū Rā'īṭah stresses aesthetic appeal in "The Apology for the Christian Religion" (GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭa* (1951), 134-35).

213. GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭa* (1951), 134-35 (#7).

فأية حالة استحسان لزم من هذا قبوله،  
وأَيّ زخرف أو تنميق يلتحق بمن هذا يقينه؟

#### TRANSLATION:

As for the fifth category,  
which is the reasoned approval [of a belief-system]  
because of its elegance and aesthetic flourishes,  
this also is inconceivable for the religion of the Gospel.  
[That is] because the one who is intended in worship  
and sought in religious observance,  
who is the stored-up treasure of the End  
and hoped-for reward,  
upon whom is reliance in this world  
and in the next,  
*is a crucified man*,  
weak in appearance and despicable to view among his crucifiers,  
who received him with every maltreatment,  
inevitably culminating in his death and burial.  
What sort of "reasoned approval" belongs to the person who accepts *this*?  
What embellishment or elegance attaches to the person  
who is firmly convinced of *this*?

The Christian apologists intended their argument for the truth of Christianity through an analysis of the reasons that make the acceptance of a religion humanly explicable to be an appeal to *reason*. From our historical distance, it is not difficult to see that the reason controlling the argument is *evangelical* reason; the apologists' lists of unworthy motives are a kind of negative schematic description of the New Testament and the earliest history of Christianity. As François Jourdan commented of one of the Christian "true religion" texts, the cross of Christ lies constantly just beneath the surface of the text even if it is not explicitly mentioned.<sup>(214)</sup> It is therefore no surprise that Muslim polemicists would write works "on the true religion" proposing *Qur'ānicly* reasonable criteria for discerning the true religion, that is, criteria summarizing the narrative of the Qur'ān and earliest Islamic history.<sup>(215)</sup> All the same, the Christian arguments were not without effect. As Sarah Strousma pointed out,<sup>(216)</sup>

... the eleventh-century mu'tazilite master 'Abd al-Jabbār goes out of his way to demonstrate that Muhammad's victories were indeed miraculous, and not at all military; that Muhammad came from a humble family and that, consequently, it was not for earthly gains that his followers joined him; that his rejection by his tribe invalidates

214. JOURDAN, "Mort" (1988), 371 (on Qusṭā b. Lūqā's response to Ibn al-Munağğim).

215. In particular, *victory* is proposed as a mark of the true prophet of the true religion, as in 'Alī al-Ṭabarī's *Kitāb al-dīn wa-l-dawlah*, 'ADIL NUWAYHID, *Dīn* (1979), 108-13, or "The Letter of 'Umar," SOURDEL, "Pamphlet" (1966), 33 [FT 26].

216. STROUSMA, "Signs" (1985), 114.

the accusation of *tashā'ub*;<sup>(217)</sup> and even that Muhammad's message spread in all languages. Together, these contentions put forward an uncommonly Christian, "Jesus-like" portrait of Muhammad's prophecy.

Thus the Christian argument for discerning the true religion by means of an analysis of "unworthy" motives for accepting a religion was a formidable one. It was in the framework of this argument that the "paradox christology" at its most scandalous point -- the crucifixion of the one confessed as Lord and God -- found not only space for existence, but a positive apologetic role.

## 2. On the true scripture

Precisely the same kind of argument that arabophone Christian apologists made for the truth of Christianity as a whole could also be made for the integrity of the Christian *scripture* in the face of Muslim charges of falsification or *tahrīf*. Already in the dialogue of Timothy with al-Mahdī we find the catholicos arguing that the presence of that which Muslims find nonsensical or blasphemous in the biblical text is evidence that Christians had *not* tampered with it:<sup>(218)</sup>

"... For if we had in some way been making changes in the books [of the Bible], we would have changed those things considered by some people to be unworthy (*bṣīr*) in our confession."

Our victorious king asked me: "What are those things which you call 'mean (*z'ūr*) in our confession'?"

I answered his benevolence: "Christ's growth in stature and wisdom; his food, drink, and weariness; his anger, ignorance, and prayer; his suffering, crucifixion, and burial; and all the other things like these which are considered by some people to be weak (*mḥīl*) and contemptible (*šīl*).

‘Ammār al-Baṣrī incorporated this argument into his defence of the integrity of the Christian scripture in the fourth chapter of his *Kitāb al-burhān*.<sup>(219)</sup> There he considers and rejects the possible motivations for the falsification of scripture. Did the alleged falsifiers want to magnify Christ? No, for the reasons pointed out by Timothy.<sup>(220)</sup> Did they want to belittle him? Again no, since the New Testament as we have it also proclaims Christ "Judge of the Last Day" (*dayyān yawm al-dīn*), "Lord of the worlds" (*rabb al-ālamīn*), and "God, Creator of things that exist" (*Allāh, ḥāliq al-akwān*).<sup>(221)</sup> Finally, did they want to replace difficult precepts with easy ones?<sup>(222)</sup>

217. A synonym of the *ta'aṣṣub*, "tribal/ethnic/racial solidarity," of the Christian lists of negative criteria.

218. MINGANA, "Apology" (1928), 130/1/14–2/2; cf. PUTMAN/SAMIR, *Église* (1975), 49\* (#265).

219. HAYEK, *Apologie* (1977), 43\*–44\*.

220. *Ibid.*, 43\*/20–22.

221. *Ibid.*, 44\*/3–5.

222. *Ibid.*, lines 6–19.

- 1 أو أرادوا محو ما يصعب عليهم من سُننه وإثبات ما يسهل؟
- 2 فلم لم يُسقطوا الكتاب أصلاً، (وكان أخفّ عليهم)، ويضعوا لأنفسهم كتاباً كما يشتهون، ويثبتوا فيه أنه،
- 3 لما أراد اليهود قتل المسيح، فأتوه، نفخ عليهم نفخةً وأحرقهم، وأنه ارتفع إلى السماء حياً، لم ينله موت ولم تُصبه آفة،
- 4 وأن يتزوَّج المرء من النساء ما أحب؛ ويحرِّموا تعذيب أبدانهم بالصوم وإدمان الصلوات وترك اللذات، كما فعل المجوس؟
- 6 فإنّ ذلك كان ألدّ عندهم وأخفّ عليهم! نعم، وثبتوا فيه ما يعقلونه لذيذاً عندهم في الآخرة أيضاً، من النكاح والأكل والشراب وغير ذلك، إذ بلغ من استخفافهم<sup>(1)</sup> بكتاب الله ما يحرفون منه ما شاؤوا!
- 7 والمّا لم يُسقطوا منه التشديد، مثل دعائه إياهم إلى عبادة مصلوب؟ (ولا أعلم شيئاً أشدّ على الملوك وأصحاب السلطان والعزّ والفخر من الإقرار بعبادة مصلوب!)
- 8 ومثل نهيه عن أن يتزوَّج الرجل بأكثر من امرأة واحدة؟
- 9 ومثل أمره إياهم بالتواضع والخضوع، واحتمال الضيم، وترك اللذات والشهوات، وإدمان الصوم والصلوات، وما أشبه ذلك؟
- 10 وإذ لم يغيروا ما ثقل عليهم بما يخفّ عنهم (على ما وصفنا)، فقد وضح أنّهم لم يغيروا حرفاً واحداً من كتاب الله عن جهته!

(1) Ed. اسخفافهم.

## TRANSLATION:

- 1 Or did they want to abolish those of its precepts that they found difficult,  
and establish those that they found easy?
- 2 Why did they not do away with the Scripture altogether,  
(which would have been easier for them),  
and compose for themselves a scripture as they desired,
- 3 affirming in it that,  
when the Jews wanted to kill Christ and approached him,  
he blew upon them with a breath and consumed them with fire,  
and that he was raised into heaven alive,  
and that death did not reach him, nor harm befall him;
- 4 and that a man may marry as many women as he desires?
- 5 [Why did they not] forbid the torment of their bodies  
with fasting, constancy in prayer, and the forsaking of pleasures,  
as the Magians have done?  
That would have been more pleasant and easier for them!
- 6 Yes, and they [might have] affirmed the existence of those things  
that their minds grasp as pleasurable also in the hereafter,  
such as marriage, eating, drinking, and so on,  
since their frivolity with respect to God's Scripture had reached the point  
that they falsified whatever they desired in it.
- 7 And why did they not eliminate harsh things from it,  
such as its call to them to worship a crucified man?  
(For I do not know anything more difficult for kings  
and possessors of authority, might, and pride  
than to avow the worship of a crucified man!)
- 8 Or such as its prohibition of a man marrying more than one woman?
- 9 Or such as its injunction of humility and submission,  
the patient bearing of wrong,  
forsaking pleasures and passions,  
constancy in fasting and prayer,  
and the like?
- 10 But since they did *not* exchange the things that they found burdensome  
for things that were easy for them  
(such as we have described),  
it is clear that they did not change a single letter of God's scripture from its place!

‘Ammār’s argument for the integrity of the Christian scripture is in its structure precisely the same as his argument for the truth of Christianity as a whole. Just as the doctrinal and ethical content of Christianity confounds any attempt to find sociologically and psychologically explicable reasons for its acceptance and spread, so also the actual content of the Bible frustrates any attempt to formulate a coherent charge of falsification. As was the case in the Christian "true religion" apology, so it is in its "true scripture" subtheme: while several aspects of the content of the Christian scripture are mentioned, the fact that *the one whom Christians worship is a crucified man* (#7 above) is at the center of the argument. The Bible’s greatest scandal is the best evidence for its integrity.

The "true religion" apology has a sharply polemical edge: the apologist demonstrates that the spread of *Christianity* is not to be explained by worldly motives, and gives the reader very broad hints that the case is otherwise for the spread of *Islam*. The same polemical edge is obvious in ‘Ammār’s rebuttal of Muslim

charges of *tahrīf*. In the passage reproduced above, we immediately notice that ‘Ammār’s description of an "easy" scripture composed to order is nothing other than a Christian caricature of the Qur’ān.<sup>(223)</sup> Furthermore, section #3 of this passage is nothing other than a (somewhat flippant) paraphrase of *al-Nisā’* (4):157! ‘Ammār’s implication is clear: if one analyzes the Bible’s and the Qur’ān’s content – *also with respect to the death of Christ* -- in the light of possible motives for altering belief- and conduct-defining scriptures, that which proves to be suspect is the Qur’ān, not the Bible. The "true religion"/"true scripture" apology as ‘Ammār developed it provided him with a framework for hinting (if not quite asserting) that the Qur’ān’s denial of Christ’s crucifixion is a psychologically understandable but still altogether human attempt to "correct" the Bible’s scandal-giving story of God’s paradoxical ways among things human.

#### IV. Conclusion

Through history the paradox christology has been a sign that the biblical interpretation of God is still alive in the church, that Hellenic religion has not utterly driven it out.<sup>(224)</sup>

This chapter has been an attempt to describe the vicissitudes of the Christian "paradox christology" – especially its scandalous language about the *death* of the one confessed as Lord and *God* -- in Arabic-language controversy with Muslims, whose language about God, we have seen, shared a number of important features with that of Hellenic religion. In the first part of the chapter we examined the clash between, on the one hand, the Bible’s confession of God’s Incarnation and the Church’s paradox rhetoric asserting and celebrating that confession, and on the other, the Qur’ān’s confession and the *kalām*’s defence of God’s *tawḥīd* ("unicity"). As Christians and Muslims worked out the "grammars" of their distinctive scripturally-authorized languages of faith, they proposed patterns and rules of speech about God and His ways with human beings that could only be understood as mutually contradictory.

In the second part of the chapter, we examined a first level of Christian apologetic consisting in attempts to blunt the sharp edges of the "paradox christology" through a variety of terminological, dialectical, and illustrative devices, as well as some Islamic responses to these devices. There can be no doubt that this material was of great importance at the time of its production. The Christian apologetic devices may well have served to quiet the doubts of Christians disturbed by Islamic claims, or to gain Christian communities some degree of respect and space for life from Muslim

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223. This is pointed out in GRIFFITH, "Ammār" (1983), 166–67.

224. JENSON, *Identity* (1982), 64.

officials. Similarly, the Islamic "refutation" literature probably served important missionary and catechetical purposes. From a particularly *religious* point of view, however, the results at this level of apologetic and polemic are disappointing. On the Christian side, the apologetic devices used, if taken in isolation from (for example) the liturgies actually prayed by the apologists, by and large represent a form of accommodation to Muslim pressure and a declension from the faith of the Church. Thus Antiochene theologians tended towards the use of language in which the one "Christ" was little more than a cipher (as in the Nestorian and Melkite christological analogies), while Alexandrian theologians tended to transform the Cyrillian confession of God the Word's taking *possession* of a human history into a mere dialectic, that of the whole and its parts. On the Muslim side, we encountered dialectical and rhetorical brilliance, but little in the way of appreciation of the distinctive Christian languages.

But alongside this first level of apologetic discourse we found (in the third part of the chapter) a very different Christian theological mood: that of tradition-maintaining and community-defining assertion of the "paradox christology" at its sharpest: "... God ... died ...". This mood of assertion came to be embraced and sustained by a *second* level of Christian apologetic, the attempt to discern the true religion through a procedure of eliminating those adopted for natural human motives. And thus the "paradox christology" gained a home in the Arabic-speaking churches, not only in the fastnesses of their liturgies, but also in their apologetics.

While the "true religion" apologetic undoubtedly gave space and prominence to the "paradox christology" and its language about the *death* of the one confessed as Lord and *God*, it is clear that the apologetic is external to the issues involved in the christology, containing and sustaining but not *explaining* its conundrums. The task of explanation -- a task which would inevitably lead to the most basic questions about the identity and being of the God bespoken by the paradox rhetoric -- was not undertaken in the *Dār al-Islām* in the ninth Christian century. It has barely begun in the twentieth.



## CONCLUDING REMARKS

I wish to the last word in this study to the arabophone Christian apologists. First, however, I will offer a few personal observations on the Christian-Muslim controversy over the cross as we have traced it in the previous chapters.

### 1. Some observations by a Christian

As I pointed out in my preface, I undertook this study in the confidence that the literature would reveal an *interaction* between Christian and Muslim apologists and polemicists resulting in *development* over time in their discourse about the cross of Christ. I believe that each of the previous three chapters shows that this confidence was justified, at least to a certain degree. Whether we examine the intricacies of Christian and Muslim exegesis of *Āl 'Imrān* (3):55 and related Qur'ānic texts,<sup>(1)</sup> or the varied Christian use of scripture in controversy with the Muslims over the cross,<sup>(2)</sup> or the Christian theologians' search for an adequate apologetic soteriology,<sup>(3)</sup> or the increase in sophistication of the Muslim refutations of Christian cross-discourse,<sup>(4)</sup> we find indications that the controversialists and apologists of each faith were -- occasionally! -- aware of what those of the other faith were saying, and that over time arguments were corrected, honed, refashioned, or abandoned. If the literature offers numerous examples of polemical tactics and rhetoric that modern dialogue-oriented religious people find distasteful, it also offers examples of considerable intellectual honesty. Along with "al-Kindī's" blatant creation of a Muslim straw man ("al-Hāsimī")<sup>(5)</sup> we must consider 'Ammār's serious and probing questions in his *Kitāb al-masā'il wa-l-ağwibah*,<sup>(6)</sup> along with al-Ġāḥiẓ's heavy-handed sarcasm<sup>(7)</sup> we must also consider al-Qāsim's very objective summary of Christian soteriological doctrine.<sup>(8)</sup> Although the word "dialogue" tends to be overused by some students of

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1. See above, pp. 115–18.

2. See above, pp. 119–36.

3. See above, pp. 151–228.

4. See above, pp. 238–46, 253–60.

5. See above, p. 25, note 124.

6. See above, pp. 182–83, 188–90.

7. See above, pp. 243–44.

8. See above, pp. 163–67.

the early Arabic Christian controversial literature,<sup>(9)</sup> there can be no doubt that some Christian-Muslim conversation, correspondence, and study reflecting a high degree of intellectual integrity was indeed going on within the Islamic caliphate in the eighth and ninth Christian centuries.

We may judge one happy result of this conversation, correspondence, and study to be the considerable *creativity* to be encountered in some of the texts we have read. As a Christian student of the history of doctrine I am especially impressed by the creativity evident in the soteriologies fashioned by the Christian apologists. I have stressed the special place that I believe that Theodore Abū Qurrah's "On the Necessity of Redemption" ought to occupy in the history of Christian soteriological discourse, shedding as it does considerable and rather surprising light on *the* foundational text of Western soteriology, Anselm's *Cur Deus homo*.<sup>(10)</sup> This, however, is not said to the disparagement of the "divine demonstration" apology with its clever defences of Christ's free agency in his passion and death,<sup>(11)</sup> or of the extraordinarily beautiful narration of the story of redemption found in "On the Triune God."<sup>(12)</sup>

However, despite all the evidence that we may discern in our literature for real interaction and learning allowing for genuine creativity of thought, our study of texts has not infrequently ended with the judgement that fundamental differences between Christians and Muslims remained unaddressed or that incompatible and mutually incomprehensible languages were being spoken.<sup>(13)</sup> Ironically, fundamental differences often appeared precisely at the point where one of the parties to the controversy claimed that agreement should be obvious. Thus John of Damascus, and after him many of the arabophone Christian apologists, thought it clear that since Muslims accepted the prophets, they should accept the Old Testament *testimonia* to Christ's career, including his passion and death.<sup>(14)</sup> In fact, however, the Bible and the Qur'ān authorize very different understandings both of the nature of a divinely-revealed scripture and of the prophetic/apostolic vocation.<sup>(15)</sup> 'Alī al-Ṭabarī thought it clear that Christians should agree to his list of divine attributes, which he called the *ṣarā'iṭ Allāh*.<sup>(16)</sup> While there was an extent to which they could do so, the language of the Bible and of the Qur'ān led to the development of Christian and Islamic theological "grammars" so entirely different that meaningful Christian sentences (attributing divine attributes to Christ) could Islamically only be seen as

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9. The word certainly does not belong in the title of "al-Kindī's" polemic. Cf. TARTAR, "Dialogue" (1977) and idem, *Dialogue* (1985).

10. See above, pp. 211–23.

11. See above, pp. 176–211.

12. See above, pp. 152–56.

13. See, for example, pp. 139–40, 149–50, 255–57.

14. See above, pp. 122–25.

15. See above, pp. 147–50.

16. See above, p. 241.

nonsensical, if not blasphemous as well.<sup>(17)</sup>

My own sense -- and once again I focus on the Christian materials -- is that the arabophone Christian apologists that we have studied tended to go *around* those fundamental differences that appeared rather than *through* them, that they tended to *accomodate* fundamental problems rather than to make serious attempts to *solve* them. If it gradually became evident that the citation of the Old Testament prophecies of Christ's career was of little or no value in controversy with Muslims, then one could instead place one's reliance on arguments based on reason, or on the *Muslims'* scripture, the Qur'ān.<sup>(18)</sup> If attributing divine attributes to the crucified man Jesus Christ was seen by Muslims as pernicious nonsense, one could attempt to explain away the difficulty using a variety of terminological, illustrative, or dialectical devices,<sup>(19)</sup> or one could even incorporate this sense of pernicious nonsense into an argument for the divinely-given if humanly-incomprehensible *truth* of this paradoxical kind of speech.<sup>(20)</sup> For a theologian, there is a sense in which this accomodation of problems -- as brilliant as a particular strategy of accomodation might be! -- is a disappointment. With regard to the paradoxical Christian language about Jesus Christ, the Muslims had in effect issued an extremely serious metaphysical challenge: *how* may a crucified man be confessed as Lord and God? What does it mean for the being of *God* that this confession be made? The Islamic challenge *could* have been a spur to renewed reflection about God's triunity, and it *could* have pushed Christians to a much belated examination of the Hellenistic concept of Deity that came into the Church with the conversion of Hellenists to the Gospel, and that ever since has existed uneasily alongside the Bible's speech about God.<sup>(21)</sup>

Still, if these possibilities were not grasped in the eighth or ninth centuries, they have hardly been grasped even in the twentieth -- and certainly not in Christian-Muslim conversation. We must remember that the texts we have been studying were not written in the service of a quest for theological truth through intentional vulnerability in inter-religious discussion! Rather, Christians wrote *primarily* for Christians, and Muslims primarily for Muslims, in order to equip people for Christian-Muslim conversation in daily life, to help the immature in faith to grow, to give resolve to the wavering, to call home the wandering, and to reassure the distressed of the *truth* of their beliefs, no matter how painful social and military realities might be. For such purposes it was necessary to draw the clearest possible lines of demarcation between the Christian and the Islamic visions of reality.<sup>(22)</sup> When Christian and Muslim controversialists did address one another it was not usually to invite one another to a discussion of the position and clarity of the line of

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17. See above, pp. 238–46.

18. See above, pp. 125–27.

19. See above, pp. 246–53.

20. See above, pp. 277–83.

21. See above, pp. 230–32.

22. See above, pp. 266–77.

demarcation, but rather to invite one another to a definitive crossing.

On the Christian side, easily the most brilliant doctrinal "accommodationist" strategy was that which we have called the "true religion" apology.<sup>(23)</sup> As we have noted, this apology did not contribute to the *understanding* of the paradoxes of the faith, but it did provide a framework within which these paradoxes -- such as the confession of a crucified man as Lord and God, and glorying in his cross -- could exist, could serve to define the boundaries of the faith, and could even play a positive apologetic role. Supported by this apologetic strategy, the "word of the cross" which the Muslim *ḥunafā'* regarded as folly was enabled to play a major community-defining role for Christians within the *Dār al-Islām* in the eighth and ninth centuries.

## 2. "We have no sign except the cross!"

A good statement of the community-defining role of the cross is to be found in Abū Rā'īṭah's "Apology for the Christian Religion." At the end of his version of the "true religion" apology,<sup>(24)</sup> we read that the religion of Moses was established by the miracles performed by means of his staff, which shared in the greater mystery of the "staff that was to come" (*al-ʿaṣā l-ātiyah*), the saving cross.<sup>(25)</sup> Abū Rā'īṭah goes on to explain that "this is the practice (*sunnah*) of God . . . : to set up His religion, *raise His standard* (*ʿalam*), and establish His proof over against His creation."<sup>(26)</sup> God's standard (*ʿalam*)<sup>(27)</sup> is the *cross*, which He has raised with the establishment of Christianity as the true religion.

Whatever antipathy the cross might arouse in others, *Christian* life, for the arabophone apologists, is life lived under its sign. This life begins with the signing of the cross at baptism,<sup>(28)</sup> and issues in a life-long struggle to live up to our baptismal covenant "so that we do not throw away what we have obtained through [Christ's] pains in commerce with sin."<sup>(29)</sup> It is a life sustained by prayer offered with the sign of the cross and focussed upon the cross as an aid to concentration,<sup>(30)</sup> and by the

23. See above, pp. 277–83.

24. GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭa* (1951), 131–40 (#2–12).

25. Ibid., 139 (#11).

26. *فهذه سنة الله . . . من إقامة دينه ونَصَبَ عَلمه وثبات حُجَّتِه على خلقه*; ibid., lines 9–10.

27. Elsewhere we find exactly the same idea, but with various Arabic words meaning "sign" or "standard." For the author of "On the Triune God" the cross is Christ's and the Christians' *sīmah* (see below). For the author of *al-Ġāmi'*, the cross is the *ʿalāmah* by which Christians are known (Chapter 18, #8, BL or. 4950, f. 120<sup>r</sup>/13–15).

28. As we are reminded in *al-Ġāmi' wuḡūh al-īmān*, Chapter 23 ("On Prayer"), BL or. 4950, f. 167<sup>v</sup>/5–8.

29. So Abū Qurrah in "On the Necessity of Redemption," BACHA, *Mayāmīr* (1904), 90/18: لَكَيْلَا نُلْفِي كَذَا. اِقْرَأْ: نُلْقِي مَا قَدْ اتَّخَذْنَا بِأَوْجَاعِهِ تِجَارَةً لِلْخَطِيئَةِ

30. See the whole of Chapter 23 of *al-Ġāmi' wuḡūh al-īmān*, BL or. 4950, ff. 166<sup>v</sup>–173<sup>v</sup>. The importance of the sign of the cross as the *distinguishing* mark of Christian prayer becomes apparent if we recall the story of 'Abd al-Masīḥ al-Naḡrānī, who as a young man fell in with

Eucharist in which there is a "renewal of the remembrance of [Christ's] death in our place."<sup>(31)</sup>

The arabophone apologists are well aware that life under the sign of the cross is not easy. Taking Theodore Abū Qurrah as their spokesman: it is a life of self-denial and long-suffering love to which Christ calls with his word, "Take up your cross and follow me."<sup>(32)</sup> In an environment in which the dominant social groups take "the word of the cross" to be folly, and often blasphemous folly at that, life under its sign means exposure to mockery and derision<sup>(33)</sup> -- and even the possibility of martyrdom. As Abū Qurrah puts the matter at the beginning of his "Chapters on Prostration to the Icons," Christian life involves the emulation of the saints who "participated in [Christ's] pains and adorned themselves in patience with the finery of his cross,"<sup>(34)</sup> but as his allusion later on to the martyrdom of his contemporary Anthony Ruwaḥ (d. 799) makes plain,<sup>(35)</sup> such speech is by no means merely metaphorical. Temptations to fall away from the cross-signed life are very real; divine help is necessary. Therefore, at the end of his "On the Necessity of Redemption," Abū Qurrah prays that God "pour down the Holy Spirit into our hearts, lest we be ashamed of [Christ's] pains which he endured for us."<sup>(36)</sup>

I conclude with one more passage from the oldest dated Christian apologetic treatise known to us, "On the Triune God" of Sinai ar. 154. At the very end of the manuscript we read:<sup>(37)</sup>

- 1 ثم قال: «آمين آمين [f. 139<sup>v</sup>] أقول لكم:  
كما يكون البرق في السماء فيُرى من المشرق إلى المغرب،  
كذلك يكون إتيان المسيح من السماء مع ملائكته.»
- 2 وترون سيمة بين يديه،  
كالبرق الذي يكون في السماء.
- 3 وإنما سيمة المسيح الصليب،  
الذي به أكب إبليس وأهلك سلطانه؛  
وجعله لأوليائه<sup>(1)</sup> سيمة يُعرفون<sup>(2)</sup> به عند الناس أجمعين.

Muslim raiders and shared in their prayers; see GRIFFITH, "Account" (1985), 362/6.

31. تجديد ذكر موته دوننا، in Abū Rā'iṭah's "Apology for the Christian Religion," GRAF, *Abū Rā'iṭa* (1951), 156 (#26).

32. In, for example, Abū Qurrah's "On the True Religion," DICK, *Créateur* (1982), 244 (Chapter 13, #8).

33. See above, pp. 274–77, 279.

34. . . . الذين . . . شاركوه في أوجاعه وتزينوا صبراً بحلية صليبه; DICK,  *Icônes* (1986), 88 (Chapter 1, #2).

35. Ibid., 173 (Chapter 16, #15–16).

36. نسأله أن يقذف في قلوبنا بروح القدس، لئلا نستحي من أوجاعه التي لقيها عنا 90/13–14.

37. Sinai ar. 154, f. 139<sup>r</sup>.

4 لعمرى، لقد علم الناس أجمعون<sup>(3)</sup> من أهل الدنيا  
أنّه ليس للنصارى<sup>2</sup> سيمة إلا الصليب،  
فيما<sup>(4)</sup> نُعرَف في الدنيا،  
ويوم القيامة عند المسيح،  
إذا جاء يدين الأحياء والأموات بأعمالهم.

(1) MS لاولياه. (2) MS يعرفونه. (3) MS اجمعين. (4) MS sic.

#### TRANSLATION:

- 1 Then [Christ] said: "Truly, truly I say to you:  
as the lightning is in heaven and is seen from the east to the west,  
so will be the coming of Christ in heaven with his angels"  
[Matthew 24:27, cf. 16:27].
- 2 And you shall see a sign (*sīmah*) before him [Matthew 24:30],  
like the lightning which is in heaven.
- 3 The sole sign of Christ is his cross,  
by which he overthrew the Devil and destroyed his authority;  
and he has made it for his friends a sign  
by which they are known by all the people.
- 4 By my life, all the people of the folk of the earth have learned  
that the Christians have no sign except the cross,  
by which we are known in the earth,  
and by Christ on the Day of Resurrection,  
when he comes to judge the living and the dead according to their works.

The expectation that Christ would be preceded by his cross at his *parousia* is in conformity with very ancient exegesis of Matthew 24:30 ("then will appear the *sign* of the Son of man in heaven . . . and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven").<sup>(38)</sup> It is of interest here as a response to the passages from the Islamic hadith literature with which I began my narration of the Christian-Muslim controversy over the cross.<sup>(39)</sup> If Muslims looked for 'Īsā b. Maryam to return and "break the cross," Christians had an entirely different expectation: the cross would not be the "casualty" of Christ's return, but its *herald*. And if, according to the Muslims, their prophet Muḥammad would not countenance the sign of the cross even as a pattern in fabric, Christians responded: "[We] have no sign except the cross by which we are known in the earth, and by Christ on the Day of Resurrection!"

38. See DANIELOU, *Théologie* (1958), 290–94. We encountered this expectation earlier when we examined "The Apocalypse of (pseudo-) Methodius," above, p. 81. We find a passage similar to this one from "On the Triune God" in Abū Rā'īṭah's "The Apology for the Christian Religion," GRAF, *Abū Rā'īṭa* (1951), 154 (#24).

39. See above, pp. 65–66.

## Appendix I:

### THE "PASSION NARRATIVE" OF WAHB B. MUNABBIH

The following hadith report of Wahb b. Munabbih, discussed at some length above (pp. 212-216), is reproduced here for the reader's convenience from ṬABARĪ, *Tafsīr* (1955-), IX, 368-70 (#10780), with the addition of numbered paragraphs and some punctuation and *taškīl*. I omit the full text of the *isnād*, which runs: al-Muṭannā / Ishāq / Ismā'īl b. 'Abd al-Karīm / 'Abd al-Šamad b. Ma'qil / Wahb. For a list of readily accessible translations in European languages, see above, p. 212, note 47.

1 إن عيسى ابن مريم (عليه السلام!)، لما أعلمه الله أنه خارج من الدنيا، جزع من الموت، وشقّ عليه. فدعا الحواريين، فصنع لهم طعاماً، فقال: «احضروني الليلة، فإنّ لي إليكم حاجة.» فلما اجتمعوا إليه من الليل، عشاهاهم وقام يخدمهم.

2 فلما فرغوا من الطعام، أخذ يغسل أيديهم ويوضّئهم بيده، ويمسح أيديهم بثيابه. فتعاضموا ذلك وتكأروه. فقال: «ألا من ردّ عليّ شيئاً الليلة ممّا أصنع فليس مني، ولا أنا منه!» فأقروه، حتّى، إذا فرغ من ذلك، قال: «أما ما صنعتُ بكم الليلة، ممّا خدمتُكم على الطعام وغسلتُ أيديكم بيدي، فليكن لكم بي أسوة. فإنّكم ترون أنّي خيركم، فلا يتعظّم بعضكم على بعض، وليبذل بغضكم لبعض نفسه، كما بذلتُ نفسي لكم.

3 «وأما حاجتي التي استعنتُكم عليها، فتدعون لي الله وتجتهدون في الدعاء أن يؤخّر أجلي.» فلما نصبوا أنفسهم للدعاء وأرادوا أن يجتهدوا، أخذهم النوم حتّى لم يستطيعوا دعاءً. فجعل يوقظهم ويقول: «سبحان الله! ما تصبرون لي ليلة واحدة تُعينوني فيها؟» قالوا: «والله ما ندري ما لنا! لقد كنّا نسمر فنكسر السمر، وما نطيق الليلة سمرًا، وما نريد دعاءً إلّا حيل بيننا وبينه!»

4 فقال: «يذهب بالراعي وتتفرّق الغنم.» وجعل يأتي بكلام نحو هذا ينعي به نفسه. ثمّ قال: «الحقّ، ليكفرنّ بي أحدكم قبل أن يصيح الديك ثلاث مرّات، وليبيعني أحدكم بدراهم يسيرة، وليأكلنّ ثمني!» فخرجوا ففترّقوا.

5 وكانت اليهود تطلبه. فأخذوا شمعون، أحد الحواريين، فقالوا: «هذا من أصحابه!» فجدد وقال: «ما أنا بصاحبه!» فتركوه. ثم أخذه آخرون، فجدد كذلك. ثم سمع صوت ديك، فبكى وأحزنه.

6 فلما أصبح، أتى أحد الحواريين إلى اليهود فقال: «ما تجعلون لي إن دلتكم على المسيح؟» فجعلوا له ثلاثين درهماً، فأخذها ودلهم عليه. وكان شُبّه عليهم قبل ذلك.

7 فأخذوه فاستوثقوا منه، وربطوه بالحبل. فجعلوا يقودونه ويقولون له: «أنت كنت تُحيي الموتى، وتنتهر الشيطان، وتُبرئ المجنون! أفلا تنجّي نفسك من هذا الحبل؟» ويبصقون عليه، ويُلقون عليه الشوك، حتّى أتوا به الخشبة التي أرادوا أن يصلبوه عليها. فرفعه الله إليه، وصلبوا ما شُبّه لهم، فمكث سبعاً.

8 ثمّ إنّ أمّه والمرأة التي كان يداويها عيسى فأبرأها الله من الجنون، جاءتا تبكيان حيث المصلوب. فجاءهما عيسى فقال: «علام تبكيان؟» قالتا: «عليك!» فقال: «إنّي قد رفعتني الله إليه، ولم يُصِبنّي إلّا خير، وإنّ هذا شيء شُبّه لهم! فأمرّا الحواريين أن يلقوني إلى مكان كذا وكذا.»

9 فلقوه إلى ذلك المكان أحد عشر، وفقد الذي كان باعه ودلّ عليه اليهود. فسأل عنه أصحابه، فقالوا: «إنّه ندم على ما صنع، فاختنق وقتل نفسه.» فقال: «لو تاب، لتاب الله عليه.» ثمّ سألهم عن غلام يتبعهم يقال له يحنّى، فقال: «هو معكم. فانطلقوا، فإنّه سيصبح كلّ إنسان منكم يحدث بلغة قوم، فليذرهم وليدعهم.»

## Appendix II:

### "THE REFUTATION OF THE ONE WHO DENIES THE CRUCIFIXION"

#### Critical Edition

The edition that follows of "The Refutation of the One Who Denies the Crucifixion" is established on the basis of:

**V** = Vatican ar. 107 (15th c.), ff. 106<sup>r</sup>-107<sup>v</sup>, and

**S** = Sbath (Aleppo) 1129 (17th c.), ff. 1\*<sup>v</sup>-3\*<sup>v</sup>.<sup>(1)</sup>

For the second part of the "Refutation" (#8-16), a helpful witness to the text is the recension in *sağ'* of the *Kitāb al-mağdal* (= **M**), which I have established on the basis of the copies in Paris ar. 190 (13th c.), pp. 295-99, and Vatican ar. 108 (14th c.), ff. 121<sup>r</sup>-122<sup>v</sup>, as well as the independent extracts in Vatican ar. 141 (16th c.), ff. 117<sup>r</sup>-119<sup>r</sup> and Vatican ar. 570 (1582 A.D.), ff. 32<sup>v</sup>-41<sup>r</sup>.

The titles are mine, as is indicated by their inclusion in square brackets.

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1. The leaves of this manuscript are not numbered. For the time being, I shall call the first leaf upon which this text appears f. 1\*.

الردّ على من جحد الصلب<sup>(1)</sup>

إنّ القرآن يشهد بوفاة المسيح قبل رفعه

«إنّي متوفّيكَ فرافعكَ إليّ»

1 القرآن<sup>(2)</sup> يشهد بالوفاة<sup>(3)</sup> قبل الرفع لقوله في المسيح، «إنّي متوفّيكَ فرافعكَ إليّ». فإن<sup>(4)</sup> كان<sup>(5)</sup> رفعه حسب قول القرآن<sup>(6)</sup><sup>(7)</sup> فقد وفّاه.

أهذا من التقديم والتأخير؟

2 فإن قالوا: يجوز في اللغة [S: f. 2\*F] تقديم فعل على فعل باللفظ، ويؤخّر بالفعل؛ قلنا: قد ورد في سورة المائدة

1. This title is adapted from those given in the MSS:

V: بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم. باب يتضمّن الردّ على من جحد الصلبوت

S: جواب من جحد الصلب

2. V: القرآن.

3. S: بالوفات.

4. S: فإذا.

5. S: + قد.

6. V: القرآن.

7. S: اعترافهم.

قوله، «فلما توفيتني كنت أنت الرقيب عليهم». فقد ثبت من قبل رفعه وفاته،<sup>(1) 2</sup> وصار الله «الرقيب عليهم»،<sup>2</sup> يعني على المسيحيين،<sup>3</sup> لأجل وفاته، ثم ارتقائه<sup>(4)</sup> إلى السماء.<sup>(5)</sup>

[«ما قتلوه وما صلبوه»]

[«قتل المسيح بناسوته وما قُتل بلاهوته»]

3 فإن احتجّ بقول القرآن،<sup>(6)</sup> «ما قتلوه وما صلبوه ولكن شبه لهم»، فيحتمل هذا القول عدة<sup>(8)</sup> تفاسير،<sup>7</sup> منها أن<sup>9</sup> «المسيح» معناه عند النصارى يشتمل على<sup>(10)</sup> جوهر الإله وجوهر الانسان، بمعنى أنه ماسح وممسوح،<sup>10</sup> لاهوت وناسوت،<sup>(11)</sup> من مقتضى الاتحاد الذي يقولون به ويعتقدونه.

- 
1. وفاه: V.
  2. بينت أن منذ ذلك العهد مات: S.
  3. دون عيسى علينا: S.
  4. ارتقا: V.
  5. إلي: S.
  6. القرآن: V.
  7. وما: S.
  8. عدت: S.
  9. معناها كان: S.
  10. اتحاد + V.
  11. وخالق ومخلوق: S.

فيكون قُتل بناسوته وما قُتل وما<sup>(1)</sup> صُلب بلاهوته، و«شُبَّ لهم» زوال أمره وانحلال سُنَّه.

### إبطال تدبير اليهود وانعكست القضية عليهم

4 والمعنى الثاني الذي يجوز أن يخاطبون به، أنه من المعلوم أن اليهود ما كان قصدهم بما فعلوه بالمسيح إلا تنفير الناس من اتّباعه وحلّ سُنَّه وإبطال شريعته، [V: f. 106<sup>v</sup>] إذ لا فرق بينه وبين<sup>(2)</sup> أشخاصهم في الشخصية والبشرية، وإنّما العداوة<sup>(3)</sup> كانت لأفعاله وشريعته، لا لذاته وشخصيته. 5 فلما انعكس الأمر عليهم بقيامته، وصحّ زوال الشناعة المنقّرة بظهور حياته وقيامته وصعوده للسماء<sup>(4)</sup> وعلوّ مرتبته واتّباع الخلق<sup>(5)</sup> له وانتشار شريعته وتعبّد الكافة له،<sup>(6)</sup> بطل تدبيرهم وانعكست القضية عليهم، وصار فعلهم سبباً لانتشار أمره في جميع الأرض، وعلوّ شأنه في الدنيا. 6 فكأنّهم قتلوه «وما قتلوه»، [S: f. 2\*<sup>v</sup>] وصلبوه «وما صلبوه»، و«شُبَّ لهم» زوال شريعته وحلّ سُنَّه بفعلهم، وبطل بفعلهم قصدهم، وانحلّ أمرهم.

- 
1. V: ولا.
  2. S: + بعض (added above the line).
  3. S: عداوت.
  4. S: السما.
  5. S: الحق.
  6. S: + وسجود الحياة لعظمته.

فكأنهم فعلوا وما فعلوا،<sup>(1)</sup> وقتلوا<sup>(2)</sup> وما قتلوا، وصلبوا وما صلبوا<sup>(3)</sup>.

[«لا تحسبن الذين قُتلوا في سبيل الله أمواتاً . . .»]

7 وهذا الكلام موافق لقول<sup>(4)</sup> القرآن،<sup>(5)</sup> «لا تحسبن الذين<sup>(6)</sup> قُتلوا في سبيل الله أمواتاً بل أحياء عند ربهم يرزقون». فقد شهد أنهم قُتلوا وليس بأموات بل أحياء لأنهم قُتلوا في سبيل الله. كذلك المسيح ما قُتل لأنه قُتل في سبيل الله، وما<sup>(7)</sup> صُلب لأنه صُلب في سبيل الله.<sup>(8)</sup> فقد ظهر ان القتل لأجل الحق ليسوا بقتلى.<sup>(9)</sup>

- 
1. S: فعلوا.
  2. S: قتلوا.
  3. بعد. قال الشاعر: «حلفوا وما حلفوا لمكرمة»، فكأنهم حلفوا وما حلفوا؛ S: + «رزقوا وما رزقوا سماح يد»، فكأنهم رزقوا وما رزقوا.
  4. S: وفي.
  5. V: القرآن.
  6. V: الذي.
  7. V: ولا.
  8. S: + كما قال في القرآن: «يوم لا ينطقون ولا يؤذن لهم، فيعتذرون»، أي، لا يأتون بحجة وإلا فقد نطقوا، فكأنهم نطقوا وما نطقوا. والدليل على نطقهم قوله في موضع آخر: «يوم يأتي [كذا] كل نفس تجادل عن نفسها». والمجادلة لا تكون بالسكوت بل بالنطق. وقيل فيمن قُتل في سبيل الله: «هم القتلى وما قُتلوا يقيناً، وذكرهموا [كذا] إلى الأباد فينا، هم الأحياء بعد الموت ذكراً، فقد فازوا، ونحن الحاملون».
  9. فأثبت أنهم قتلى وما قُتلوا، لكونهم قتلا [كذا] من أهل [كذا] الحق S: 9.

## الردّ على من يدّعي بالتشبيه

8 فإنّ<sup>(1)</sup> التشبيه ليس له محيد عن<sup>(2)</sup> أربعة أوجه: إمّا أن يُنسب إلى الله، أو إلى المسيح، أو إلى اليهود، أو إلى الشيطان.

اهل الله شبّه لليهود مثال المسيح؟

9 [V: f. 107r] فإن قيل<sup>(3)</sup> إنّ الله شبّه لليهود مثال المسيح صوراً<sup>(4)</sup> له<sup>٦</sup> عن

القتل،<sup>(5)٢</sup> فهذا يباين<sup>(6)</sup> العدل، لأنّه (تعالى!)<sup>(7)</sup> لا يُؤثر الضلال<sup>(8)</sup> بالخيال.

والكتاب<sup>(9)</sup> يشهد بالوفاة قبل الرفع، كما بيّنا.<sup>(10)</sup> 10 ومعلوم أنّ الله، [S: f. 3\*٢] لمّا

- 
1. M. V: والا. S: ب.
  2. VM. S: من.
  3. SV. M: قال.
  4. M. VS: صرفاً.
  5. V. S: omit.
  6. M. VS: تباين.
  7. V. S: omit.
  8. M. VS: الضلال.
  9. VM. S: كتات.
  10. S. V: بيننا.

أرسل موسى النبي<sup>(1)</sup> إلى مصر، لم يُطلق<sup>(2)</sup> لسانه مع حاجته إلى النطق، بل شدّ أزره بأخيه<sup>(3)</sup> لينفي عنه التشبيه.

### اهل المسيح شبه لليهود مثله؟

11 وإن قيل<sup>(4)</sup> إنّ المسيح شبه<sup>(5)</sup> لليهود<sup>(6)</sup> مثله<sup>(7)</sup> ليرتكبوا القتل منه، فلماذا كان المسيح ٢يغرّ أمماً كثيرة<sup>(8)</sup> ويموّه عليهم؟ وما هو<sup>(9)</sup> غرضه في إظهار مراد الأعداء بما يعدل بالأشياء<sup>(10)</sup> عن طريق الهدى<sup>(11)</sup>؟ ولو علم<sup>(12)</sup> الحواريون تخيل الصلب، ما الذي دعاهم إلى إشاعته<sup>(13)</sup> مع عظيم شناعته<sup>(14)</sup>؟ 12 ومن كان بشهادة

1. VM. S: omit.

2. VS. M: + عقدة.

3. VS. M: بهرون أخيه.

4. VS. M: قال.

5. S. V: تشبه. M: مثل.

6. VM. S: لليهود.

7. VS. M: شبهه.

8. V. S: incompletely written: بعرا انما لبره.

M: يغرّ أمّه وتلامذته وأصفياه.

9. V. SM: omit.

10. M. V: بالاستماع. S: بالاستماع.

11. SM. V: الهدا.

12. SM. V: علموا.

13. V. S: شناعته.

14. V. S: إشاعته.

القرآن<sup>(1)</sup> مباركاً يوم يولد<sup>(2)</sup> ويوم يموت ويوم يُبعث حيّاً، كيف يصير بموته مُخيلاً  
وببعثه مُضلاً<sup>(3)</sup> وبالتشبيه مُغويّاً<sup>(4)</sup>؟ ومَن أرسل في آثار<sup>(5)</sup> الأنبياء موعظة<sup>(6)</sup> وهدى<sup>(7)</sup>،  
كيف يصير سبباً للضلال<sup>(8)</sup>؟ ومَن هو «آية للناس ورحمة»، كيف يتمثل بالتخييل<sup>(9)</sup>؟

اهل الشيطان مثل لليهود شخصاً مثاله؟

13 وإن قيل<sup>(10)</sup> إنّ الشيطان مثّل<sup>(11)</sup> لليهود شخصاً مثاله، فما السبب في  
إشفاق الشيطان على داعٍ إلى الإيمان؟ ولم غيب المسيح شخصه في الحال  
والوقت، فيضلّ<sup>(12)</sup> تلاميذه وأتباعه<sup>(13)</sup>؟ وما الذي منعه من تعريف أصحابه  
أنّ [V: f. 107v]

- 
1. SM. V: القرآن.
  2. V. SM: ولد.
  3. SM. V: مضلاً.
  4. VM. S: معوناً.
  5. M. VS: اثر.
  6. VM. S: موعظة.
  7. VM. S: وهكذا أو هكذا.
  8. M. VS: للضلال.
  9. V. S: بالتخييل. M: في التخييل.
  10. V. SM: قال.
  11. VS. M: صور.
  12. SM. V: فيضل.
  13. VS. M: أشياعه.

ذلك المصلوب من خيالات الشيطان؟ 14 وكيف <sup>(1)</sup> ذلك، وقد أنبأ عن <sup>(2)</sup> نفسه بصلبه، وبعده كشف لتوما، أحد الحواريين، <sup>(3)</sup> عن آثار جسده لتحقيق قيامته في نفسه؟

اهل أحبار اليهود مؤهوا على العوام بصلب مثله؟

15 وإن قيل <sup>(5)</sup> إن أحبار اليهود مؤهوا على العوام بصلب مثله، فمُحال أن يبعثوهم على اتّباعه، إذا رآه <sup>(6)</sup> العوام <sup>(7)</sup> حيّاً بعد إظهار <sup>(8)</sup> قتله! وكيف اتّفق وقت مرادهم من كان بصورة المسيح في كلّ الأحوال، ولم يقطع <sup>(9)</sup> بينهما تمييز الناظرين [S: f. 3\*V] ليزول <sup>(10)</sup> الاشتباه <sup>(11)</sup> والمحال؟ وذلك لم يتّفق منذ آدم لما في مخالفة الأشخاص بعضها بعضاً من المنافع.

- 
1. V. S: + يكون.
  2. V. S: appears to be على.
  3. V: الحواريون.
  4. V. S: omit.
  5. VS. M: قال.
  6. S. V: أراه. (M: رأوه, following the subject.)
  7. V. S: omit.
  8. VM. S: إظهار.
  9. SM. V: يقع.
  10. V. S: لتزول. M: يزول.
  11. M. VS: الاشتباه.

## اخاتمة القول

16 والنبوّات من قبل شهدت<sup>(1)</sup> بذلك،<sup>٦</sup> اي، على صلبه.<sup>(2)٣</sup> والمسيح شهد به على نفسه من قبل،<sup>٦</sup> كما قلنا بدءاً.<sup>(3)٣(4)</sup> واليهود اعترفوا بالفعل، والأشباع<sup>(5)</sup> آمنوا حيث<sup>(6)</sup> عاينوا، والعيان شاهد لنفسه.<sup>(7)</sup> ولا طريق إلى مكابرة<sup>٦</sup> لانسان<sup>(8)</sup> صادق قوله.<sup>(9)٣(10)</sup>

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1. V. S: شهادة.

2. V. S: omit.

3. V: بدياً.

4. V. S: omit.

5. SM. V: omit.

6. VS. M: بما.

7. V. S: نفسه.

8. V. S: الانسان.

9. V. S: صادوحه.

10. V concludes: كمل ذلك، والله الشكر دائماً أبداً سرمداً.